

\*Title: The Perfect Girl\*

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Disclaimer: I don't own Harry Potter or any of these characters but I own the plot and the concept of the 'Hunting Season'. ^\_~ Everything else belongs to JK Rowling. (although I wish I owned Draco. \*wink\*)

Rating: PG-13 (at the moment... \*smirk\*)

Summary: The hunting season has just begun and Draco Malfoy, only heir to the Malfoy line, is on his relentless pursuit of the perfect bride with very high qualifications. But what happens when the only person to match up to his standards just happens to be his worst enemy, Harry Potter? H/D SLASH! ;)

Genre: Romance/Humor

Warnings: This is a SLASH fic (sorta) so all those who are homophobic or find the idea insulting, PLEASE TURN BACK NOW. I will not tolerate flames of any kind telling me that slash is disgusting and all that crap. I'm not forcing anyone to read this so please don't bother wasting words for an amusing flame. Also, I must warn you, this is my FIRST SLASH FIC so be nice... \*wince\* This is also a POST VOLDEMORT fic and a WiP depending on how many reviews I get. ^\_~

Spoilers: SS, CoS, PoA, GoF, OotP, just to warn you. ;)

Pairings: Draco/girl!Harry, Blaise/Hermione, Ron/Luna, Neville/Ginny

Short Note: Hey everyone! To those who are readers of my other stories, I want to clarify that this fic has nothing to do with my AAA series. This is just a little idea of mine that I just had to write... \*giggle\* Anyway, I'm an avid reader of slash fics about my favorite slash couple- Draco Malfoy and Harry Potter! They're the only slash pairing I actually read so I figured I might as well give this a shot. Don't worry, I will continue to write AAA, this is just a little sideline that might help me get past my writer's block at the moment.

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## Chapter 1- The Hunting Season

Draco Malfoy, extremely handsome aristocrat and the most sought-after bachelor in Hogwarts was furious.

Again.

The hunting season had finally begun.

Pureblooded wizards from rich, prominent families everywhere were now eagerly searching around the school for their perfect wife, getting ready to marry and carry on the family bloodline entrusted to them. It was a Wizarding tradition done and kept in every old Wizarding family when their son would reach the age of seventeen and Draco, having turned seventeen early last summer, was already nearing his deadline.

It was a well-known practice that should a son not produce himself a worthy bride by his assigned deadline, his father would take upon himself the responsibility of choosing for him. Draco could not allow that.

He needed to find his perfect girl. And fast.

Around him, he caught glimpses of Blaise, Crabbe, Goyle, Longbottom and even Weasley eyeing the female spread around the school, no doubt already beginning their search of their soon to be wife and son-bearer.

His own father, Lucius Malfoy had been nagging him all summer about finding himself a girlfriend that would soon produce him his well needed future heirs for the Malfoy family line. Now that Harry scarface Potter had finally brought the downfall of Voldemort that year, everyone was at ease in the Wizarding world and the Malfoys could once again focus on another priority—procreation.

Although scarface himself had refused to believe it, his father had actually been working as a spy for the Order that Dumbledore had

initiated in their fifth year and had been working for the light ever since. He and Draco had to keep up the façade of course, acting as though they hated anything to do with mudbloods and Dumbledore but the truth was, both Lucius and Draco were anything but evil.

Sure, Draco was a jerk every now and then. Okay fine, scratch that. He was a jerk to every single person he met but he was no Voldemort, that was for sure.

He shuddered at the thought. How could he be another power-hungry, crazed maniac bent on taking over the world? Why, the man seriously needed a life. He spent the whole of it trying to seek out a young boy and in the end, brought his own death. In Draco's opinion, he was a complete idiot.

Besides, he had far better things to do with his time. At the age of seventeen, Draco Lucius Malfoy had finally grown into his Malfoy genes, earning the glances of every female in sight.

Silver blonde hair, dazzling silver eyes, a lean and muscle-toned physique built up from years of Quidditch training and a well practiced sexy smirk, Draco was one of the most eligible and desired boys in the school. The only other being Harry Potter himself.

Harry Potter. He thought in annoyance, raising his eyes up to glance at the extremely handsome boy sitting with his friends at the Gryffindor table.

The emerald eyed boy didn't notice his glare as he laughed and slapped his best friend, Ronald Weasley on the back, obviously engaged in conversation.

Draco felt his eyes glaze over in unhidden lust as he stared openly at his longtime crush.

Over the years, Harry had actually surprised everyone when he had grown out of his starved orphaned image and had matured into a fine, gorgeous young man. For some unknown reason, his jet-black hair had finally been tamed and surprisingly enough, the Gryffindor golden boy now styled it into sexy spikes on the top of his head. He had

finally taken a hint from Granger the year before and had gotten rid of those annoying glasses of his and had instead, performed a magical spell on himself to fix his eyesight.

Gone was the lanky, starved frame and was now replaced with the sexiest body Draco had ever seen, lightly toned and lean from all the Quidditch training he had received. His body easily rivaled Draco's any day.

Damn you, Potter. Do you have any idea how crazy you drive me? He thought inwardly, fuming as he watched Seamus Finnegan, that annoyingly flirty Irish slut engage Harry in a light conversation, the other boy taking the advantage to run his eyes down Harry's lean frame.

It seemed, however, that it wasn't only physical changes the young Gryffindor had gone through those years. Draco had been surprised, to say the least, when Harry had lost his shy and timid personality and had finally grown into his strength and aggressiveness, reminding everyone around just how like his father he really was.

His godfather, Sirius Black, presumed dead for sometime after their fifth year, had finally been found the previous year and from what Draco had heard, Harry was now living comfortably with him as they lived off Sirius' inheritance from his pureblood clan.

I've never seen scarhead look happier. Draco thought, smirking as he watched Harry again, his eyes narrowing in slight annoyance.

But it wouldn't be wise to dwell on that now. No, not at all. His father expected much of him and he could not afford to pursue Potter. No, he needed to find himself the perfect wife—The perfect Lady Malfoy and the search would just about begin today.

He would show all of those other idiots—Weasley, Longbottom, Thomas, all of them. He would find himself the best catch there is from among these females. He would find himself a perfect bride and watch their ugly, reeking faces turn green with envy. He was Draco

Malfoy after all—born to hunt for the best. The most beautiful among the pack.

But how to lure out the best among the rest? I want the winning trophy, the best catch among the rest. He thought, his eyes now roaming on the Ravenclaw table in front of him.

Now just what was he looking for exactly? Draco fused his eyebrows together as he mentally leafed through the pages of the Malfoy family handbook. Chapter 5, part D—The right qualifications in choosing a wife:

Number one, she had to be beautiful. Beauty was always a requirement for every Malfoy was to ensure the well-development of the next generation's children.

Next was charm and wit. Malfoys have always been endowed with charming wizards and witches all throughout history. It was a requirement for to be the lady of the Malfoy household would have meant being able to hold oneself in lively, intellectual conversations with other aristocrats.

The third was intelligence. The mind was always an important value. What better to impress one's in-laws with than by the gift of a well-educated mind? Draco's father had always said that a woman who was both smart and beautiful was dangerously perfect. He proved right.

The next important requirement was reputation and accomplishments. A witch with a scale of accomplishments would look quite good in the future history books and on the Malfoy family tree. After all, they could not afford to have impotent witches in their family.

Fifth was of course, a sexy body. Ooh, Draco definitely liked the sound of that. Personally, he had added this one up all by himself but it was definitely a requirement for him. Although it wasn't in the family handbook, his future wife had better be sexy enough to satisfy him for if not, then the idea of bearing children would be completely unbearable to him.

Lastly, what Draco really wanted was aggressiveness. Oh yeah, he liked his women rough and fiery alright. He loved powerful women. He didn't want no weak, pathetic defenseless little housewife who served and heeded at his every beck and call. No, he wanted a woman who fought back. He wanted a woman who liked to dominate over him. Someone who could spice up his desires and lust, complete with a leather whip to match.

A wicked smirk spread over his handsome features at the thought. He liked that. Very much. He loved it when a woman played hard to get. And he loved it more when a woman wasn't afraid to show him her true strength. That was definitely a must-have.

Alright, so I personally added that requirement again but hey, I'm the one choosing here anyway. He thought, rolling his eyes as he resumed back to his searching.

Tantalizing silver eyes blazed as he surveyed the bustle of busy Hogwarts students entering the Great Hall that morning.

It seemed that in the entire female population of Hogwarts, pureblood, mudblood or half-blood alike, no one, no one could reach his standards in his search for his perfect girl.

His father had already given him a tight deadline—he was to present to him his chosen bride by their Graduation Ball at the end of the year. Should Draco fail to present anyone that night, his father will formally set his engagement to his childhood acquaintance and nightmare, Pansy Parkinson. He definitely could not have that.

Pansy was not the woman he wanted to imagine coming home to every night after work. Just the thought of having to marry that pug-faced girl turned Draco's stomach inside out.

And just who 'do' you imagine coming home to, every night anyway? A voice had nagged inside his head but he shook it away, his cheeks flushing.

Alright, so it was true then. When he imagined his married life, an image of emerald green eyes and a lightning shaped scar came into

full focus but he knew that such an idea was completely and ridiculously impossible.

He had to admit, he had grown a little too fond of his Gryffindor rival than he would have wanted to but he knew nothing could happen between them. He was to produce an heir...Marry a woman so he can continue on his family's legacy. And as much as he wanted Harry, it just will not work.

Sighing sadly, Draco forced himself to look away and set aside the thoughts, concentrating on what he was supposed to do.

He had already narrowed down his potential choices and even those had not truly fit into his true image of what he wanted. Mandy Brocklehurst, Lavender Brown, Padma Patil, Lisa Turpin and last but not least, Hermione Granger. The last one had come as a bit of a shock for him but given the small selection he had, he found there were no other choices left to choose from.

Before he could stop himself, he glanced up again, this time, his eyes widening as he finally managed to lock gazes with Harry right across the Hall. Harry glared right back at him, giving him a cold smirk before turning away, turning back to talk to Ron beside him.

Draco smirked right back, feeling his anger boiling inside him at how Harry had snubbed him off but he let it slide, shaking his head.

"I honestly don't know why you're setting such high standards for yourself, Draco. We have a pretty fine selection of potential wives right here." Blaise Zabini, Draco's best friend, commented casually beside him, his gaze lingering for a long moment on a certain Gryffindor's face.

Draco merely snorted in response, choosing instead to ignore his comment.

"Seriously, though. You're wasting your time looking for the perfect wife by setting all those high requirements. No one is going to top that list, Drac." Blaise pointed out smugly, turning to give Draco a sneer.

Someone does... Draco thought silently as he eyed Harry again, his eyes glowing with desire as he watched Harry's eyes light up in humor before laughing at Seamus' words.

He couldn't help but notice now how ironic things seemed to be with him. Now, as he surveyed Harry's appearance closely, he couldn't help but realize something.

Beautiful, charming, smart, sexy, popular...And damn well aggressive. Damn you Potter...You would have made the perfect wife for me if you had only been a girl. He thought almost wistfully, smirking again.

"Draco?! Are you even listening to me?!"

Draco rolled his eyes and turned slowly to face Blaise, keeping his smirk placed calmly on his handsome face.

"Look, I will not lower my standards just to meet my father's deadline. If I'm going to be forced to remain with a woman for the rest of my life, then I will choose a wife that fits my liking." He answered arrogantly, raising his goblet to take a sip.

"I'll be surprised if you find anyone at all, Draco." Blaise snorted, shaking his head in dismay before turning back to observe a fascinating scene at the Gryffindor table that Draco failed to notice.

Crabbe and Goyle sniggered beside them just as Draco narrowed his eyes, glaring at his so-called best friend in indignation.

"Of course I will Zabini. In fact, I'm telling you three now, I vow to marry the best girl there is in this wretched school and once I catch her, you will all turn green with envy because you have demoted yourselves to marrying something less than you deserve." Draco said, a confident smirk on his face.

"Keep dreaming, Draco." Crabbe said, laughing at Draco's irritated face just as Blaise looked back at him, his eyes twinkling mischievously.



“Is that so, Malfoy? You willing to make a wager on that then?” Blaise asked, giving both Crabbe and Goyle a knowing wink.

Draco narrowed his eyes at the other boy, secretly nervous about the gleam in his eyes. “What are the terms, then Blaise?”

Blaise gave him a reckless grin. “We both go on our respective hunts for our perfect girls. Whoever manages to bag the better girl among the two wins.” He said, smirking when he saw Draco’s eyes flicker for a brief moment.

“So basically, the guy who gets the better girlfriend wins?” Draco asked, raising an eyebrow in question.

Blaise nodded, offering his hand. “You got it, Malfoy. Twenty galleons. You up for it?” He asked, looking at him directly in the eye.

Draco smirked back, taking the hand immediately and giving it a firm shake. “Just twenty? How about fifty then, Zabini?” He taunted, a cool, calm smile on his face.

Blaise looked slightly alarmed but covered up right away, blinking before nodding back, glaring at him. “Fine. Fifty it is then.” He agreed, returning Draco’s firm and reassuring squeeze.

Just as the two boys had let go, Blaise slowly transformed his smirk into a full-fledged smile, his gray eyes twinkling in challenge.

“Happy hunting, Draco.”

TBC...

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A/N: Well, what do you guys think? Do you think I should continue this story? PLEASE REVIEW AND TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK!! \*giggle\* Oh and I hope I didn’t confuse you with this chapter, basically it’s about the hunting season and how every pureblooded son in the family must search for his worthy bride at the age of seventeen. Draco of course, is no exception to that tradition as are the other

pureblooded wizards in Hogwarts. \*wink!\* Every man for himself!  
\*giggle\* I hope you guys are getting the flow of the story so  
far...Draco will find the perfect girl a little later. ^\_~ REVIEW,  
REVIEW, REVIEW, REVIEW!!! \*mwah!\*

## Chapter 2- It all started when...

Harry James Potter, the boy who lived to be annoyed, was...well, annoyed.

Again.

From right across the Great Hall at the long Slytherin table sat the object of his annoyance. Draco dickhead Malfoy. Alright, so he was being pretty childish with the nickname but he couldn't help it! The boy lived to do nothing more than to torment him with his own childish nicknames for him, completely unoriginal, he could assure you.

Scarhead, scarface, Pothead, Potty, the-boy-who-lived-to-be-a-pain, the list went on and on. And they all did nothing but to...well, annoy him.

Draco smirked at him from across the hall, an elegant eyebrow lifting slightly in acknowledgement before he turned away to stare at a group of leggy blondes at the Ravenclaw table.

To say it all simply again, Draco Malfoy just completely annoyed the bloody hell out of Harry Potter.

What the bloody hell is that bloody ferret bloody looking at?! He thought in annoyance, trying in vain to listen to what Seamus was saying at the same time, ignoring Malfoy's piercing stare.

The minute he had walked right into the Great Hall, he felt Malfoy's intense gaze on him. To say he was annoyed was actually an understatement. He was downright disturbed! What did that bloody git want?

Harry looked up, meeting his gaze steadily with a cold glare before he returned the favor and smirked, turning away with a ticked-off scowl.

Malfoy was really getting on his nerve a lot these days. Hell, what was he talking about? The bloody ferret was always getting on his nerves, ever since he had started Hogwarts in the first place.

You would have thought the blonde would have given up their petty fights and childish arguments a long time ago but noooo... Things were just as the same as they were before.

Even now, after his defeat of Voldemort, Malfoy was still the same jerk he was seven years ago. Harry hated him and his stinking, pureblooded guts.

Sure, he would admit that Malfoy was handsome. Okay fine, the boy was bloody gorgeous but Harry could certainly not care less. He just found it all the more annoying that his worst rival was a bloody gorgeous, annoying little ferret instead of just being an annoying little ferret, minus the gorgeous part. That way, Harry wouldn't find himself checking the boy out every now and then. Wait, that's not what— Argh!

Bloody ferret... He repeated again, grumbling to himself. Yup, to say it again for the last time, Draco Malfoy annoyed the hell out of Harry Potter.

I got it already! A voice snapped inside his head in irritation and he flushed, not at all expecting his own self to answer back to him.

“Hey Harry, mate, you gonna eat that? Thanks!” Ron cut in, stabbing a piece of chicken right off of Harry's plate, bursting right through his best friend's thoughts.

Harry shook his head in dismay as he watched Ron attacking his plate savagely, making the food on it disappear faster than Hermione could have said Wingardium Leviosa. He winced.

“Honestly Ron, you are such a slob.” Harry remarked, earning himself a glare from the redhead before he gulped and turned back to his plate, ignoring Harry's words.

“Harry's right, Ron. Aren't you even worried about the hunting season this year?” Hermione pointed out, looking up from a large, thick textbook laid out in front of her.

Harry suppressed a grin as Ron merely burped and made to wipe at his mouth before looking up at Hermione again, his eyebrows fused together in confusion. "Eh? Hunting season? How did you know about that, Hermione?" He asked curiously.

Hermione gave a tutting sound, flipping her now sleek, straight brown hair over her shoulder. Just last summer, she had finally taken the liberty of permanently straightening her hair with a simple charm she had found. The change had been better than she would have expected. No one had been able to recognize the once bushy-haired girl in the now beautiful brunette.

"I can read, Ron. According to some wizarding books I've read, most pureblooded families keep the tradition of hunting for the perfect wife at the age of seventeen. Hasn't your father set a deadline yet?" She asked, looking up at him in interest.

Ron paled instantly, getting his red hair to stand out more just as Harry stifled a laugh, amused at the other boy's reaction. "Of course he has, Mione. He's giving me about one year to find myself a good, steady girl I can marry. Luckily, he didn't give me any requirements." He said, looking relieved.

"Requirements? What requirements? You need certain requirements to choose a girl?" Harry asked incredulously, feeling a little annoyed at Sirius for not having explained this whole concept to him.

Ron looked at him in mild surprise. "Of course, Harry. Every pureblooded family has always kept this tradition for generations now. Our family still decides to keep it but we're not as uptight as the other families are about our requirements or deadlines." He explained, biting into an apple.

"Really? How do they go about it on other families then?" Harry asked, suddenly immensely curious.

"The really old wizarding families, like the Malfoys and the Longbottoms are really strict about their heritage. To them, finding the right girl is more on the matter of finding the girl who completely matches up to all their high standards than on the fact that he loves

her. Their marriage is based on compatibility and procreation, not love.” Hermione answered for him, not even looking up from her book to see Harry’s wide-eyed stare.

“How does your family base it then?” Harry asked, looking carefully at Ron.

Ron shrugged, giving Harry a grin. “Dad doesn’t really care who I choose as my future wife as long as he knows I love her. That’s why I’m not going into too much of a hassle as Malfoy is right now.” He said, gesturing to Malfoy with a smirk.

Harry turned to look at where he was pointing, grinning in amusement when he saw Malfoy’s eyes travel slowly and carefully along every house table, the gleam in them getting more desperate by the second.

“I almost pity him. Must be hard to be the only heir to a family like his.” Harry commented, shrugging before turning away and taking a swig of his pumpkin juice.

“Yeah, from what I heard, the standards Malfoy’s set for himself are pretty extreme. Wonder how he’s ever going to find himself a mate.” Hermione said, laughing lightly.

Ron soon joined her, laughing while Harry just grinned and shrugged, turning back to his plate of untouched food. Boy, was he ever relieved that he wasn’t a pureblooded wizard. As if defeating Voldemort hadn’t been enough, he didn’t know he could handle it if he was to go ‘hunting’ for a perfect girl like Malfoy and the others were.

Something though about the way Malfoy stared at him made him feel slightly uneasy about himself. Whatever it was, he definitely did not like it.

Harry looked up and found himself staring into Malfoy’s cold silver eyes again, this time the Slytherin lifting one corner of his lips to give Harry a smile.

Harry’s eyes widened in horror, nearly falling off his chair in surprise. Yup, he definitely did not like it.

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Harry grunted and burst through the door to the Potions dungeons hastily, finding himself face to face with the startled expressions among the Gryffindors and Slytherins already starting their lesson.

“You’re late, Mr. Potter.”

Harry groaned under his breath as he looked right into Snape’s annoyingly smug black eyes, ignoring the other gazes he was earning from the other students in the room.

“I’m sorry sir. Prof. Dumbledore had asked me to bring something to his office and—”

“I do not wish to hear your lamebrain excuses, Potter. You are late. Ten points from Gryffindor. Now take your seat!” Prof. Snape barked, causing Harry to wince to himself as the Slytherins all sniggered in amusement.

Draco shot him a smirk just as Harry looked around the room, seeing to his disappointment and Ron and Hermione’s apologetic look, that the only seat left in the room was the one right next to Mr. Smirking Idiot himself.

Oh great... Ron decides to sit with Hermione and I’m left to sit with ferret boy. He thought in annoyance, narrowing his eyes at Malfoy just as Snape rounded on him again.

“I said, take your seat, Potter!” He hissed, immediately causing Harry to sit down on the chair, hearing another round of light laughter from the Slytherin side of the room.

“Why Potter, I didn’t know you were so eager to sit so close to me.” Draco drawled in a soft whisper just as Snape began to continue his lecture, once again redirecting the class’ attention to the front.

“You wish, Malfoy.” Was all Harry said, refusing to meet the other boy in the eye for fear of getting told off by Snape yet again.

Draco just smirked again, lazily turning back to listen to Snape's lecture with an unperturbed look on his frustratingly handsome face. Harry mumbled under his breath, wanting nothing more than to strangle the boy beside him and hurl him at Snape's greasy head right in front. He wouldn't have been surprised if Draco and Snape shared brainwaves, the way they seemed to share each other's thoughts about tormenting him.

Harry continued to inwardly rant and fume like this in silence, nearly burning a hole right through Snape's head with the intensity of his glare. He barely understood anything Snape was discussing or the potion they had to make but you couldn't really blame him. Really. Not when his worst enemy was just inches away from him for him to feel the heat emanating from his body.

Not at all.

As soon as Snape had finished with his lecture, he began assigning them their usual partners and Harry, as usual, was partnered with Draco. Not that he wanted to be partners with Draco of course. Nope, not at all.

"Well, hurry on up then Potter. Start gathering the ingredients." Draco ordered lazily, giving Harry a pointed sneer before he began setting up the materials on the table.

Hurry on up then, Potter...Start gathering the ingredients... Harry mimicked childishly in his head, rolling his eyes before he got up and did just what Draco had instructed, making sure he had a scowl on his face the whole time.

With a glare, he promptly dropped all of the needed potion ingredients in front of Draco, earning himself an irritated look from the Slytherin. "Potter, you clumsy oaf! Can't you be a little more careful with that?" He snapped, the sneer never leaving his face.

Harry turned and gave him one of his fiercest glares that he knew would have sent Voldemort running away in a pink ballerina skirt. For the millionth time that day, he was bloody annoyed by bloody Malfoy.



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If looks could kill...Draco thought in amusement, loving the agitated look on his Gryffindor's face as he struggled to keep himself from attacking him. Not that he didn't like the sound of that idea, of course. Potter, all pissed off and furious, lunging at him and pinning his body down onto the cold dungeon floor while he writhed beneath him. Ooh, now that was definitely intriguing.

Needless to say, Draco, at that very moment, was extremely thankful for the miraculous genius who thought of making Wizard robes long and loose. He'd probably have to remember that guy's name. He was a savior to every hormonal teenage boy alike.

Blushing, Draco coughed and turned away, ashamed at himself for being caught fantasizing about Potter again. And this was worse! This was in broad daylight right in front of the little bugger himself!

Harry gave him a weird look, an eyebrow raising up in query but Draco had coughed again and set back to work, casting the blush away from his face.

"Potter, I know you fancy me and everything but could you get working? Unlike some people, I don't enjoy to have others gawking at me all the time." Draco drawled spitefully, causing Harry to glow a bright shade of red in anger.

"You think I enjoy people gawking at me like that? You don't know me at all, Malfoy." Harry answered coldly before he turned away and started to work on his own potion, falling into a tense silence.

Draco bit his lip, almost regretting what he had said but he kept silent and didn't dare look up at the handsome Gryffindor, keeping his eyes trained on his potion. It was probably better if he kept their communication this way anyway. Like it or not, Harry was Potter was still most definitely a male and that alone was something his father would never accept.

Why the bloody hell did I have to fancy 'you', Potter? He thought, sighing heavily to himself.

More to distract himself from Harry's cold silence than anything else, Draco looked up, his jaw dropping open in disbelief. What better a sight to greet him than to see his own best friend, Blaise Zabini, talking what appeared to be a serious conversation with Hermione Granger?

Well it looked like she was definitely off his list now. Draco smirked in amusement as he met Blaise's eye from where he sat. Blaise just grinned back smugly before turning to talk to Hermione again, taking the same initiative to flash her a charming smile.

He really couldn't blame Blaise though. Even though Granger was in fact a mudblood, she actually fit into a lot of characteristics a pureblood family would have wanted for a daughter-in-law. He couldn't wait to see how Blaise went about this one.

He had been so preoccupied with his thoughts that he didn't notice Prof. Snape stop right behind him, peering over his shoulder to inspect the potion in his cauldron. Harry had long stopped working now and sat, looking up coldly at Prof. Snape as Draco jumped and whirled around, giving Snape a reckless grin.

"Mr. Malfoy, I assume you have finished with the potion?" Snape asked softly, peering down at the blonde Slytherin just as Draco smirked and nodded in response, gesturing to the steaming cauldron in front of him.

"Indeed Professor." He replied confidently, missing the mocking look he had received from Harry and the other Gryffindors at the snobby tone of his voice.

"Good. I will move on with my lesson. Mr. Malfoy, will you kindly explain to these Gryffindors what this potion does?" Snape droned on, handing Draco a bottle of clear green liquid.

Draco took the bottle and inspected it closely before answering, turning to give Harry a smug grin as he spoke.

"This potion, sir, is a mind transformation potion. It allows the maker to transform the drinker into any living creature the maker wishes. Permanently. Dark witches and wizards in the past have used it the previous generations until it was banned in 1803 and legalized again in 1990 but with serious permission requirements upon availability." He answered easily, yawning for effect.

"That is correct, Draco. Why then, should a potion this powerful be made legal again for use?" Prof. Snape continued, earning the full attention of the class now as he spoke.

"Sir, due to past discoveries, several wizards have found the effects of this potion to be particularly useful especially when it came to animal breeding. However, it is only readily available at the ministry itself and is only used for serious purposes. No one otherwise should be able to come in contact with it." Draco explained once again, this time earning Snape's nod of approval.

Ron made a face behind Snape's back, causing Harry to snort in laughter to himself as he turned away, not wanting Snape to see him.

"Correct, Mr. Malfoy. 15 points to Slytherin. Just so you all know, this mind-transformation potion, is classified as a red-labeled potion. Just like all other potions I have discussed with you, it is a potion well handled by the Ministry of Magic but is unavailable to other wizards because of the hazards it may cause. Can anyone give me anymore examples of red-labeled potions?" Prof. Snape asked, turning to look at Harry with a sneer.

"Mr. Potter? Why don't you tell me what this red-labeled potion is?" Snape asked again, this time setting another potion onto their table with a knowing smirk on his face.

Harry inspected the similar green liquid calmly, keeping his face neutral and his eyes unreadable as he did. Then, looking up, he met Snape's eye and merely blinked, unafraid of his mocking gaze.

“It’s Veritaserum, sir.” He answered, his voice steady and confident while Snape narrowed his eyes at him, looking annoyed at him having said the right answer.

“Correct. And can you tell me what it does?” Snape pressed, raising an eyebrow haughtily at him as he promptly ignored the raised hands, including Hermione’s, in the air and kept his eyes trained on Harry.

“It allows the maker to ask any question of the drinker and certifies a true response. Give a person Veritaserum and you can ask anything about him or her and he or she would answer nothing but the truth.” Harry replied, much to both Snape and Hermione’s disappointment.

“That is correct, Potter. The Veritaserum demands only of the truth from any witch or wizard who takes it. Now, why don’t we have a live demonstration then? Potter! On your feet, now!” He ordered, yanking Harry up by the arm and dragging him to the front of the room in front of his desk.

Draco felt a mischievous smile break out on his face. He definitely liked where this was going. He was anxious on to what Snape was going to be asking his—er, Harry about certain....Things. Particular things about his object of lust, desires, fantasies...Well, er, you get the picture.

“Sir, I hardly think giving Veritaserum is—”

“Sit down, Ms. Granger or I shall be giving you Veritaserum after Mr. Potter, here.” Prof. Snape interrupted, glaring at Hermione as she slowly sat back down, her eyes wide in embarrassment.

Draco laughed out loud, much to the Gryffindors’ and Harry’s anger. “Draco, fetch the Veritaserum for Mr. Potter will you?” Snape asked, sneering as Draco nodded and grinned, grabbing the bottle of clear green liquid and handing it to his head of house.

“Scared are you, Potter? Haven’t you ever played a game of truth or dare?” He taunted, whispering in his ear when he passed him, feeling Harry stiffen, his green eyes blazing with anger.

“Ask away, Malfoy.” He replied coldly, meeting his gaze before Snape finally yanked the cork off the bottle and thrust it at Harry, giving the boy another cold look.

“Well? What are you waiting for, Potter, drink it!” He ordered, thrusting it at him again just as Harry tentatively took the bottle, eyeing it for a long period of time.

“Well what are you waiting for, Potter? Christmas? Show that Gryffindor bravery and drink it.” Snape mocked spitefully, earning another chorus of laughter from the Slytherins.

Harry glared up at him before looking carefully at Ron and Hermione’s faces. Ron was currently shaking his head no while Hermione was just biting her lip and shrugging, silently urging him with her eyes to just agree with it and take the potion.

Then, sighing he turned and managed to lock eyes with Draco again, this time his eyes hardening when he saw the teasing glint in the Slytherin’s cold silver orbs. Well, he would show him. He would show them all that he wasn’t afraid. After all, he had already defeated Voldemort, what could Snape possibly do to him?

Shutting his eyes, he promptly lifted the potion to his lips and took the vile liquid in all in one gulp, wincing as he already felt his stomach lurch in disgust at the disgusting concoction.

As soon as the last drop had disappeared within his lips, the bottle slipped from his hands and fell to the floor, shattering into a thousand pieces but it seemed no one seemed to care.

Snape watched him slowly as he felt the ground sway beneath him for a long moment. Then, steadying himself, he slowly opened his eyes again and met his stare, a smirk on his face.

“Well? Go on then, Professor. Ask away.” He urged sarcastically, turning to give Draco a self-satisfied smile.

Prof. Snape looked surprised and oddly worried at his sudden recovery but Draco had given in right away, looking at Harry with a

twinkle in his eye. "Alright then Potter, who in this very room do you want to pin against the nearest wall and shag senseless?" He asked, earning a gasp from their housemates.

Harry's eyes widened slightly, a blush rising up in his cheeks but he inwardly sighed and nodded, opening his mouth to answer.

Draco.

"No one." He replied but as soon as the words had left his lips, he stopped in confusion, his eyebrows coming to meet together on his forehead.

"What—"

He didn't finish as Snape suddenly lunged at him, his eyes widening in horror and alarm. "Potter you idiot! That wasn't Veritaserum, that was—" He stopped when Harry finally stumbled onto the ground, his hands moving to grasp at his head.

"What's happening? What's happening?" Pansy Parkinson shrieked as Harry finally let out a loud scream of pain, causing all of the students watching to shoot up in their seats in alarm and make to move away from the screaming boy.

"Harry!" Ron screamed but his voice was soon drowned out as Harry screamed again and fell onto his back on the floor, his entire body writhing and convulsing with unbearable pain.

"Professor! What's happening to him?! What are you changing him into?!" Hermione asked frantically, rushing to talk to their Professor but Snape had gone pale and was now doing nothing but watching the boy-who-lived convulse and twitch painfully on the cold floor.

"Professor! What are you changing him into?! You can make it stop, can't you?!" Hermione asked shrilly again, this time finally getting Snape to look at her curiously.

“It...It wasn't me who made the potion, Ms. Granger.” He answered in a hoarse whisper, his eyes widening bigger and bigger as he watched the Gryffindor boy transform in front of him.

Harry had long lost sight of what was happening around him by then and was now crying out in pain, flailing madly on the floor as though his body had been possessed, curling itself before flailing out again.

“What?! But then who did, Professor?! Professor!” Hermione demanded frantically again just as Ron managed to reach them.

Snape didn't answer as his eyes grew wide as saucers now when he took in the sight in front of him. Hermione and Ron both followed his gaze and turned around, a gasp escaping from Hermione's lips.

Harry Potter had stopped convulsing alright and his body was now laying on the floor lifelessly but that wasn't what had caused the loud gasps and whispers from the other students around the room.

Hermione blinked once. Twice. Thrice. Hell, she blinked four times before she finally managed to convince her feet to walk and take her to the unmoving form of her best friend.

“Hermione...H-He's...” Ron failed to continue as Hermione slowly bent down and inspected Harry's figure, her hand trembling in disbelief.

Prof. Snape though, finished the sentence for him, his black eyes moving from Harry's motionless form to the pale, frozen blonde across the room who hadn't spoken or moved from his spot during the entire incident.

“He's a girl.”

TBC...

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A/N: Evil cliffhanger!! Mwahahahaha!!! (Draco: Oh shut up!) \*wince\* Er.. Okay. ^\_^ Anyway, that's all for now, I'll try to update the next

chapter within a couple of days or so depending on how you guys like this story. Oh and I know the whole Harry-turns-into-a-girl plot is overused but I'm willing to make a lot of differences with this one so please give this a chance. J Oh and warning, future OC-Lucius and OC-Narcissa in future chapters just so you guys all know. ;) Well, please let me know your opinion or if I should continue! PLEASE REVIEW!! REVIEW! \*MWAH!\*

Wiccachic2000- Hope you liked this chapter! J

Angel- Thanks! I hope you liked this chapter!

GiRliEgIrL6- Thanks! I'm glad you like this story! J

Dreamer22- \*giggle\* Yup, I just love spikyhaired!Harry. \*drool\* ^\_~ Keep reading!

PalmTreeBlood- I must agree entirely about the more Draco and Harry part! \*wink\* hehe! I just love their pairing! Thanks and keep reading!

Oxi-Nu- Yup! Definitely girl Harry action here! \*grin\* Thanks so much for the compliment... \*blush\* And I hope you keep reading! ;)

MuirninCocan- Heya! Thanks for reading the story and I hope you liked this chapter! J Luv ya!

Lady-x-Malfoy- Ooh... I love your name. \*wink\* Jealous too... \*pout\* ^\_~ Anyway, thanks and I hope you enjoyed this chapter!

hp4all- O\_o.. Er... I guess I should respect your opinion but if you didn't like this story, you didn't have to read it. I did put the warnings. Just to tell you that. Anyway, I will update my AAA so don't worry, I won't let this story interfere with it.

OutofAzkaban- Hey there! Thanks so much for reading this even though I know you aren't a fan of slash, I really appreciate it... \*sniff\* Aw.. I luv ya too sweetie! ^\_~ Thanks for the wonderful review and I hope you keep reading my other story! \*mwah!\* ^\_^



silvamagic: Aw...Thanks! \*giggle\* I'm really glad you like this story so far and I hope you liked this chapter. Keep reading! Luv ya! ^\_~

Minerva-Severus-Dumbledore- Hey there! Just to tell you, I absolutely loved your veela-Draco story (Learning to Love a Veela) and I'm honored you would review my fanfic. ^\_~ I really hope you keep reading and please give me suggestions if you have any. ^\_^

Well, thanks everyone! PLEASE REVIEW!!! \*mwah!\* ~slythe~

### Chapter 3- The-Girl-Who-Lived

Draco stared. He goggled. He stared again. He winced. He widened his eyes and...stared... again at what had just been the flailing body of the boy-who-lived-to-be-an-arse. And quite a good arse that was, he assured you but that was beside the point.

The point was, his worst enemy, Harry James Potter, the-boy-with-the-hottest-arse-in-the-bloody-school, was now a...He couldn't say it! Oh the horror of it all!

No, actually, yes he can.

Draco held back a smirk.

A girl.

A bloody bleeding female.

Harry Potter, his longtime crush and rival, was now a girl.

A bloody girl.

A make-up wearing, tight skirt donning, shrill voiced sounding—Now hold on just a minute, Tight skirt?? Mmm... Now he liked the sound of that.

But that was again beside the point.

The point was, Harry had just taken the wrong potion and had just transformed into the freaking opposite gender right in front of him! The boy had been writhing on the floor in front of him in absolute pain and suffering, screaming his head off.

It was an outrage!

It was absurd!

It was absolutely and disgustingly vile!

It was...bloody hot!

Merlin's bloody beard, he was lucky he had been wearing loose robes that day otherwise he would have been a goner! Were they bloody crazy putting a screaming Potter (who sounded definitely female by the way) right in front of him?! That was like putting chocolate in front of a three year old!

Ooh... Now that Draco was on the subject of both chocolate and a deliciously female Potter, wouldn't mind if he spaced out for a minute now would you?

Of course not. Didn't think so. Ooh... That's nice.

Needless to say, Draco found himself suddenly growing very uncomfortable again, guiltily hiding himself behind a desk to hide his growing...er...anxiety.

But that was again beside the point. Harry Potter had just been turned into a bloody female within their eyes. And it was all his fault!

Well, maybe not entirely. Well maybe not even partially! He didn't deserve even 1/16th of the blame of what happened to Dumbledore's Golden boy—er—girl—er—whatever! In fact, it wasn't his fault at all that the idiot had drunk the wrong bloody potion in the first place! Who were they kidding?!

Of course...They didn't exactly say anything to blame him yet but he was just making sure that no one would have anything to say against something that wasn't his fault.

Ooh...The Weasley and Mudblood are giving him those Gryffindor glares again? What? Did they actually think he was the one who did this to Potter intentionally?!

No, of course not! he absolutely had nothing to do with this. Nothing at all, you hear? Nothing. N-O-T-H-I-N-G. After all, it wasn't his fault that he had accidentally (make sure you stress the word 'accidentally' by the way) snatched the wrong potion and had given it to Hogwarts' golden boy—er—girl.

Damn.

He'd have to get used to that one.

Anyway, as he was saying—Nope. Not his fault at all.

Although... He didn't exactly say anything about him not liking the change now did he? Draco smirked evilly as he trailed his silver eyes down the motionless form of the former boy in front of him.

Potter just seemed so bloody hot as a girl. Wait, but that was straying from his point. His point? Well yeah, he was just getting to that! Don't rush!

His point was—er—is... That Harr—Er—Potter; the-boy-who-lived-to-be-and-had-a-great-arse, was now the-bo-er—girl-who-lived-to-be-and-had-a-great-arse-and-had-a-large-chest.

Draco barely prevented a suggestive leer from breaking out onto his handsome face.

Not that he didn't like the change of course. Oh no, not at all. He didn't mind the change in the very least. Harry turning into the hottest-gal-in-school Hogwarts had ever seen ever since Lily Potter herself in a span of three minutes was a-ok with him.

But you really did not have to know that... Ooh...Now he did it. Draco goggled again as Granger bent down to poke at Harry's motionless figure lying on the cold floor.

He watched, eyes going misty as the brunette poked Harry again, the other Gryffindors and Slytherins watching behind them with wide, curious eyes.

He blinked and watched as Prof. Snape crouched down and inspected Harry's form, ignoring the rapid whispers of the students all around them.

“Professor...Exactly who did make that potion?” Granger asked fearfully. Honestly, you would think the mudblood would have some brains on her judging from the fact that she’s the top in the year...Tsk...

Prof. Snape remained silent, looking up slowly until he met Draco’s guilt-stricken face, his expression one of accusation. The blonde Slytherin couldn’t help wince in anticipation.

“Mr. Malfoy... I would like you to come here. Now.” Prof. Snape said softly, his tone surprisingly softer than his usual snappy voice.

Draco had a feeling that that was definitely not a good sign. Snape glanced back at the students around them and instantly set it back into an angry scowl. “What are you all gawking at?! Get back to your seats and start cleaning up!” He barked in his usual...Snappy-Snape self.

Draco winced again. Not a good sign at all.

Everyone instantly sprang into action, leaving only him, Snape and both the remaining members of Potter’s little dream team themselves. He snorted at the thought. Seems they didn’t look so tough now that their fearless leader was a bloody girl.

“Mr. Weasley, Ms. Granger, kindly inform Madam Pomfrey of what has happened.” Snape ordered, glancing down at Harry’s unmoving form again.

“But Professor—”

“Not another word, Weasley. Unless you want to end up the same situation as Mr.—Or should I say, Ms. Potter here.” Snape interrupted, seizing Draco by the arm.

Ron paled and shut his gaping mouth before he was promptly dragged off by a huffing Hermione, both Gryffindors rushing off to find the said nurse.

As soon as they were gone, Prof. Snape turned to Draco with a glare that Draco could only return with a half-smile, half-grimace, half-sheepish look.

Snape narrowed his eyes at him and indicated to the limp girl on the floor, giving Draco a sneer. "You carry Potter to the hospital wing, Mr. Malfoy. I shall be informing the headmaster of what has happened." He said, a slightly worried look on his face.

Draco's eyes widened like two Quidditch quaffles. "Sir?! You want me to bring Potter to the hospital wing?!" He asked, his voice cracking incredulously.

"Well who else is responsible for this, Mr. Malfoy?! The tooth fairy? Cupid?! Pick the girl's skinny arse up and bring her to the hospital wing!" Snape ordered angrily, giving him a look before storming out to find Dumbledore.

Draco stared after him with his jaw hanging open, the other Slytherins sniggering at him from their seats. Looking up, he gave them all his meanest glare, causing them to shut up immediately in intimidation.

Oh, he was good. He was damn good.

Giving them one more glare, he slowly bent down and gathered the boy-turned-girl into his arms with a strange gentleness in his movements and a softness in his eyes that some of his housemates and the other Gryffindors blinked in surprise.

Draco ignored them and carried the girl out of the classroom draped in his arms, the entire classroom silent in anticipation.

Oh but don't worry, I don't plan on kidnapping your little hero or anything. Well... Maybe not in the way they're thinking... Draco thought, smiling smugly as he slowly began walking towards the hospital wing.

Make no mistake about this one; this was definitely one trip to the hospital wing he was in no rush to speed up. He actually wanted to take this time to observe Harry's new appearance.

Now that he had the girl draped over his arms, he was able to see the facial features more clearly, obviously surprised at what he saw. Draco stared...Yes, Again.

She was...She was beautiful. He gently traced a thumb over a slender cheekbone. There was simply just no other word to describe her.

Her dark, raven hair had grown excessively, now long enough to brush against her lower back just above her slender waist. Several stray strands framed her delicately pale face and just barely covered the lightning bolt scar, which was still sitting prettily on her forehead.

The robes she wore had loosened immensely on her now lithe and slender figure, which had now...Taken another form altogether...

Draco's eyes traveled slowly over to the rather impressive er...lumps found underneath the Gryffindor's red sweater.

Interesting. Ooh...Now Draco definitely liked that change.

He let his eyes travel on to the now prissy pink lips, the softly fluttered eyelids, the smooth curve of her neck, the long, shapely legs shaped underneath her now baggy trousers, the curve of the ever-so-well-formed hips, all the way up again to the single earring on her left ear.

Draco smiled to himself.

He certainly had no qualms about this. Who knew Potter looked bloody hotter when he was a member of the other sex?

And who was he to say anything about this? This suited him just fine. Potter spending the rest of his life as a girl...

Wait a minute...Potter....Girl? Potter...As a girl....A girl who could sexually reproduce and give heirs...Potter...a girl...Wife...Potter, Wife, girl, heir...That's it!

Draco's eyes widened in unhidden joy and delight. No, this certainly did not bother him at all! In fact, this was bloody perfect!

Potter—girl, Potter—girl, Hunting Season, crush, perfect, qualifications... The buzzer sounded ringing in Draco's head. No, not that head, you sicko!

Now that Potter was most definitely the hottest bloody female the school has ever seen, he didn't have any more reason to prevent himself from going after his crush.

Bloody hell, Potter as a boy was able to fill in every single one of his qualifications. Potter as a girl was just making it all too perfect!

Perhaps this was just the lucky break he had been looking for! He, Draco Lucius Malfoy, could not find any suitable woman out there to be his wife; therefore, the fates have decided to make one suited for him.

Beautiful, intelligent, popular, charming, sexy, aggressive...Yup, it all seemed to fit Potter. Now all he had to do was manage to convince his father that Harry Potter was now a girl.

Oh he wouldn't have any trouble with that, he could assure you. His father himself had once said that Potter should have been born a bloody female to begin with. A parselmouth like that gifted with the qualities of Voldemort himself was definitely an addition to the Malfoy family line.

Oh the irony of it all was almost too much to bear.

He glanced down at the bundle in his arms and gave Harry a grin, using one hand to push the lock of long black hair out of her face. Now all he had to do was get Harry to fall for him before the Graduation Ball.

Shouldn't be too hard. Right?

After all, he was Draco Malfoy, rich, powerful and one of the most handsome guys in the whole bloody school. Actually...Now that he



thought about it, the only other handsome guy was now a girl...Meaning he was the most handsome boy now...

He smirked at the thought. Oh how the gods loved him. What the girls wouldn't give to get into his pants.

"You'll be mine, Potter...I promise you that..." He whispered under his breath, using one hand to brush a stray lock of now long black hair out of her eyes.

Mortal enemies be damned...16 years of resentment were forgotten now. Now he would concentrate on one thing in particular...That was...hunting down the perfect 'girl'...Harry Potter...

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"Good Merlin! What happened to Mr. Potter?!" Madam Pomfrey managed to screech out as she began busying herself with Harry's form, oblivious to the look Draco was giving her female patient.

"I believe Potter would be a 'her', now, Poppy." Snape answered sarcastically, earning himself an irritable look from the nurse.

"I am very much aware of Mr. Potter's current gender, thank you very much. But what I'm concerned with is how this happened in your class, Severus!" She scolded as she began rifling through some potion bottles.

Prof. Snape's nostril's flared. "I beg your pardon?! This was not, under any circumstances, my fault! If I had known that stupid boy—"

"Well if you had made him drink a potion in front of class like you usually do, then maybe this would never have happened!" Madam Pomfrey cut in, giving Snape her meanest glare.

"I wasn't aware of what was happening, Poppy! One of my students had accidentally given him the wrong potion and I—"

"Ah, and so that would be Mr. Malfoy here now wouldn't it?! Well I can perfectly understand why he would do it, Severus. The two boys

have been bitter rivals for years now, surely you would be giving him a severe punishment for his doing?" Madam Pomfrey pointed out icily, eyeing Draco.

Draco's eyes widened in insult and anger. "Hey! It wasn't my fault! Both potion bottles were right there in front of me with the same color, I just got confused that all!" He defended himself huffily.

"Rubbish!" Madam Pomfrey snapped impatiently at him.

"That is enough!"

Everyone in the room fell silent as Prof. Dumbledore entered the hospital wing, his eyes not on them but on the sleeping boy—er—girl on the bed.

Draco finally felt a twinge of guilt. Maybe it hadn't been right for him to be so happy of this incident after all. It wasn't like it had been fair for Harry's behalf at all what had happened and as much as he preferred the other boy was a girl now, he knew Harry would never accept the news.

Draco wouldn't. Just the thought of him switching from a gorgeous boy with a dick to a gorgeous girl with breasts was just too shocking. He would have an all out fit.

However, the Mind Transformation Potion was in fact permanent. Draco had known it the minute he had laid eyes on Harry's motionless, curvy figure on the floor. As much as anyone could try to research, there was simply no antidote. That was why the potion had been classified "red-label" in the first place.

And...Guilty as he was to admit it, yes, it had been him who had made the potion. A project for Prof. Snape last term. Although he told the truth when he said that he hadn't meant for that to happen at all, it had been his own uncontrollable mind that had desired for his gorgeous rival to take the form of a girl.

He was as good as guilty.

“Would you kindly explain what has happened to Harry, Severus?” Dumbledore asked patiently, turning to look at both Snape and Draco pointedly, his eyes lingering on Draco with a strange gleam.

He didn’t do it! He didn’t do it! Er...Right, um...Right on.

Madam Pomfrey tutted and shook her head before pulling the curtains around Harry’s hospital bed, covering the beautiful Gryffindor from the other three’s sight.

Prof. Snape coughed and looked at Draco, who in turn, gave the older Slytherin a glare. “Hey! It wasn’t my fault, Professor! I swear, it was an accident!” He insisted, turning his eyes to Dumbledore’s disbelieving ones.

“You are Mr.—Ms. Potter’s number one rival in school, Mr. Malfoy. That fact does not look so kindly against you. And surely, being Prof. Snape’s top student in class, you would have identified the potion easily...?” Prof. Dumbledore asked, his eyes inspecting the blonde.

Draco’s eyes widened. “Professor Dumbledore, I swear, I didn’t mean it. I admit I would have had a motif to turn Potter into a girl but not because of what you think! I want him as a girl so I can shag her senseless and—”

Snape coughed loudly, causing Draco to stop and give him a sheepish smile.

“Er...But you didn’t need to know that. But anyway, as I was saying, I didn’t mean for this to happen! Even I make mistakes you know...I may look perfect but I’m not.” He said huffily, raising his nose snobbishly in the air.

“But you have all the reasons here to sabotage, Potter, Mr. Malfoy. Look at your record.” Prof. Dumbledore said calmly, giving Draco a searching look.

“Professor, for the last time, I didn’t mean it! I just wasn’t thinking when I grabbed the potion bottle off that table, I hadn’t realized it

wasn't Veritaserum. I would have thought Prof. Snape would have corrected me if he saw that." Draco said smugly.

"Don't you point this one on me, Malfoy!" Snape boomed.

"Well it's true, isn't it, sir?" Draco asked sweetly.

"Silence! Enough!" Dumbledore roared again, finally managing to quiet both Slytherins down again.

Snape and Draco both glared at each other but kept silent, their eyes traveling to peer at the curtains around Harry's bed.

Dumbledore was pinching the bridge of his nose in thought, his eyes closing as he fought to control his confusion. "If I may ask, Severus...Just who did make that potion?" He asked, looking at him.

Snape sneered and turned to look at Draco, who paled and backed away slightly in response.

"I—I did, Professor Dumbledore." The blonde answered, biting his lip hesitantly as he spoke the words out.

He was surprised however, when Dumbledore's eyes twinkled instead of darkening in anger or suspicion, causing him to back away once more in fear.

"Er...Professor?!" He asked, his voice cracking in surprise.

Dumbledore didn't answer, the old man looking as though he was having trouble holding his laughter in.

Just what exactly did that old crackpot find so damn funny all the time, anyway?! Draco's father had always said that Dumbledore was mentally wrong in the head.

"Ah...I see, Mr. Malfoy. Tell me something, Mr. Malfoy...Just what is your...er...sexual orientation?" He asked, nearly causing Snape's eyes to bulge out of their pockets.

Draco blinked once. Twice. Thrice.

He gaped.

“I beg your pardon, headmaster?!” He asked again, nearly collapsing on the spot in humiliation.

Dumbledore smiled cheerily, his blue eyes twinkling in unhidden mirth and amusement.

“What is your sexuality, Mr. Malfoy?” He asked again, this time earning Snape’s incredulous stare as well.

Draco blushed. Hell, he fidgeted on the spot as his silver eyes sought to fixate itself on the hem of his black school robes.

“Uh...Well...I’m...Er... I’m Bi actually, headmaster...But I don’t really see what my orientation has to do with this.” He added angrily, his cheeks still blushing red.

Dumbledore grinned again and turned back to Poppy, who was now busy fretting over the-girl-who-lived’s now...er...girl body.

“Er...Well, I guess we can discuss the rest of this in my office, would you say? I am sure there are certain matters with the ministry that you must be answering, Severus...” He said jovially, not noticing the ashen look on Prof. Snape’s face.

“Professor, have they heard of what happened to dear Harry?” Madam Pomfrey butted in, peeking through the curtains around Harry’s hospital bed.

Dumbledore nodded. “If I am not mistaken poppy, I believe certain Ministry Owls have just arrived in my office right about now. Along with a certain Black pad-footed friend if I might mention...” He winked at Madam Pomfrey, who looked just about ready to strangle the old codger.

Draco bit his lip and tried to ease his way out the door behind him without being seen.

“Come along then, Mr. Malfoy, we have matters to discuss.” Dumbledore prompted merrily, dropping a firm hand on Draco’s collar and stopping him from his futile escape attempt.

“Er...Professor, wouldn’t it be much better if I stayed here? I could watch over Potter for you if you like—Er...Uhm—”

“Nonsense, Mr. Malfoy! I am sure that Mr. Black will be quite interested on the things you have to talk to him about his goddaughter.” Dumbledore shot him an encouraging grin.

What the hell—?! Encouraging grin?!! Barmy old geezers like that old fool shouldn’t be shooting encouraging grins to young blonde adolescents intent on hunting down their rival! It was just...Wrong!

Draco felt spooked. He always knew Dumbledore was mental. Now he knew the headmaster was completely insane.

“Professor, if my father hears about this, I shall—”

“Oh don’t you worry about that, Mr. Malfoy. I am certain that Lucius will find out soon enough and then you can talk about how you plan to go about this certain...liking you have taken towards Ms. Potter.” He added, winking at him.

Okay. Now Draco was really spooked. It was bad enough to have Dumbledore encouraging him but winking at him was just all disturbing!

That was almost as disturbing as the time Pansy Parkinson stuck her hand down his crotch! Okay...But you didn’t really have to know that now didn’t you? Erugh....

“Er...Professor? You’re not mad about this??” He asked, his voice cracking in disbelief.

Dumbledore just chuckled and led an incredibly confused Draco and an equally confused and glowering Snape out of the hospital wing.

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"I can understand your would-be motifs, Mr. Malfoy. After all, Harry Potter would seem the perfect girl to hunt down this hunting season should he have been naturally born a girl. But...It seems with this happening, I find I cannot will myself to be angry." He explained, shrugging.

"And why is that, Professor?" Snape asked, watching the old man carefully as though he didn't dare believe his eyes.

Dumbledore's eyes gleamed knowingly.

"Because...I believe that if the fates themselves did not will for this to happen, then it never would have occurred. I truly believe that Mr. Potter was transformed into a girl for a real reason. And if my suspicion serves me right, then this change is indeed for the better...if Harry should learn to accept it of course." He said, smiling.

"What do you mean, Professor? I'm not sure I get what you're saying." Snape said suspiciously, narrowing his eyes in distaste at the mention of Harry.

"I'm saying, Severus...That maybe Harry was meant to transform into a girl. Just a feeling...A strange feeling...I am just about certain that this change will be the cause of another big event about to happen in his life that I'm sure he is meant for. And who am I to interfere with that?" Dumbledore answered, shrugging in response.

"How can you act so calm about this, headmaster?!" Snape asked again, this time growing slightly hysterical.

"Ah...But calm yourself, Severus...I am only choosing instead not to make such a big fuss out of this. You know what they say about fate...It will always find a way to make things the way it wants things to be." With that, Dumbledore gave a light chuckle again.

Snape looked just about ready to strangle him at that point but thought better of it. After all, "Hysterical Professor gone insane not

only transforms the boy-who-lived into a girl but also murders Hogwarts Headmaster” will not look too damn good on the cover of the Wizarding headlines.

Draco however, was a different story.

He looked like he had just taken a trip down to his own perverted illusions as his eyes glazed over and he walked on with a dreamy look on his face, practically salivating to himself.

Snape made a disgusted face at his so-called godson.

“Mr. Malfoy, my office is this way.” Dumbledore said merrily, causing Draco to blink and redirect his footsteps but continue nonetheless with his sick thoughts.

Snape grumbled to himself and followed after them moodily.

Why Draco was ever a dignified Malfoy, he did not know.

What he did know was that the blonde boy was a complete idiot at times. He was starting to get a very negative outlook on blondes because of this.

Well...Maybe not all blondes. Just those whose first name was “Draco” and whose last name was “Malfoy”.

Ignoring Dumbledore’s horrible annoying whistling and Draco’s drooling face, he followed them all the way up to Dumbledore’s office, mumbling and grumbling to himself the entire time.

He knew one thing was for sure. Draco had made that potion and it had been Draco’s own perverted mind that had turned Potter into a bloody female in the first place.

He wasn’t exactly sure where the blonde Slytherin was going with this event but he didn’t like it at all.

Not to mention Potter...Snape winced.



A bloody female Potter?! The horror of it all. The monstrosity! An outrage! A complete scandal! An absolute uproar to seize the Wizarding World since the Dark Lord had announced he was gay!

Well okay...Maybe the last part was made up but he could dream couldn't he? Humph! Anyway, the main fact was that every one, every single Potter die-hard fanatic in this snotty little world would be blaming him, Severus Snape, for what happened!

Damn it! Damn the boy! Or girl! Or whatever the hell...! Even through his son...or daughter, James Potter still had it in for him!

Oh he'd get them back one day...One day, he'll get his revenge! He shall rid the world of all green-eyed, scar-headed, four-eyed freaks named 'Harry Potter' and rule all of Britain...and then...The world! Mwahahahaha!!

Ahem! Er...Right yeah, sorry about that. Got carried a way a bit.

Bloody Potter for drinking that damn potion like an idiot.

Bloody Malfoy for being such a perverted little wanker.

Bloody Dumbledore for being so damn happy...for smiling all the damn time!

Bloody House-elves for washing his underwear and making it too damn tight.

But most of all, bloody Potter and his stupid instantly grown tits!

Ooh...Damn that boy—er—girl.

\*\*\*

A/N: Hahahaha!! That Snape is just too darn funny, I couldn't resist making fun of him a few times, hope you guys don't mind... ^\_~ Also, I'm sorry if there wasn't any Harry/Draco interaction yet but I promise there will be in later chapters as I'm certifying that this is 100% D/H slash. ;P I just LOVE that pairing. \*giggle\* Oh and THANK YOU TO

EVERYONE WHO REVIEWED THE LAST CHAPTER!! I feel so honored, 2 chapters and already 56 reviews?! Whoa...That means a lot guys, thanks! ^\_~ Some shout-outs to: GiRliEgIrL6 (Yup! \*evil smile\* He definitely will....), anna may (\*Blush\* Aw shucks...Thanks! ^\_^), Fantastic Mr Foxkins (Aw thanks sweetie! I'm glad you like AAA and I hope to post the next chapter soon too! \*wink\* Keep reading ok?), Oxi-Nu (\*grin\* That's okay, you're still special. ^\_~ Thanks for reading!!), Saiyajin-Neko (Doesn't he? \*wink\* \*giggle\* thanks though! I don't deserve that compliment! \*blush\*), PalmTreeBlood (\*giggles\* Thanks! Keep reading! ^\_^), Virginia C. Weasley (Thanks sweetie! Hope you keep reading! ^\_^), vampel (Thanks! Hope you liked this chapter!), Tikki (Thanks for the email! Keep reading! ^\_^), Twisted Crimson, Legolas19, Artemis (He did didn't he...\*wink\*), flamegirl, PrincessSarcastica, Web Walker, WonkyKris (Aw...Thanks! Appreciate it! ^\_^ You don't have to continue reading it if you don't like slash, I'm just honored you still tried. ^\_~), berry-berry (Yeah, I know stories seem much hotter if they're both still guys and I admit, I find that sexier too but I thought I'd give it a different go... ^\_~ Hope you don't mind but Harry's stayin a girl in this one. \*grins\* You'll get a lot of attraction resistance though...^\_~), justxme (Isn't he though? \*drools\*), Qtypie (Yeah, I know. I hope to finish this one though. ^\_^), silvamagic (I rock?? \*blush\* Thankies!! ^\_^ Hope you keep reading!), Muirnin (Thanks for the email, sweetie! Luv ya! ^\_^), Kaaera (Yes, he fits ALL expectations...\*hint-hint!\* \*giggle\*), Slytherin Bitch 4ever (Yup, I plan on making this different. Hopefully. ^\_~ Keep reading!), Belle (\*shriek\* OMG! I had no idea you read slash! \*giggle\* That was quite a shock to me but thanks for reviewing sweetie! Means a lot! ^\_^ Always nice to see another fan of my h/d slash couple. \*giggle\* Thankies!), A.J.D'Angelo (Er...I'm not sure yet. I'm thinking Harry wouldn't want his name to change but we'll see... ^\_^), Rena (Hey, thanks for the ideas and everything. I'll try as much as possible to make this story different from the others out there but yeah, it's humor so not everything is meant to be taken seriously. \*giggle\* Thanks again and keep reading!), moonlight blossom, midnightaura, Sylvia Sylverton (Er, no uhm, Harry turned into a girl because Draco was the maker and he unintentionally wanted Harry as a girl. ^\_^ Keep reading! ^\_^), MHS02, zeynel (Yup! Let's see what happens...\*wink\*...\*giggle\*), godric1, Mimi (\*scared look\* Uh-oh... Hehe! \*giggle\* Just kidding! Glad you liked it! Keep reading! ^\_^),

kiocci, Amaly Malfoy (Er...I didn't really understand the review but thanks though. I still appreciate it. ^\_^)

AGAIN, THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO REVIEWED AND EMAILED ME! LOVE YOU ALL! \*mwah!\* PLEASE REVIEW AGAIN AND TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK! \*huggles\* ~slythe~

## Chapter 4- Bloody Hell!

Sirius Black was seething.

He was irate.

He was furious.

He was livid, even.

He was positively salivating with a need to sterilize the line of the Malfoy family forever, starting with the smug, smirking blonde right in front of him at that very moment, who was unfortunately his cousin's husband.

In short, Sirius was just plain pissed out of his pants.

Er..Ehem, metaphorically speaking of course.

And why the hell wouldn't he be?! Here he was, angelically minding his own damn business by planning the next future demise of his slimy, hook-nosed enemy (three guesses who) when a ruddy owl just had to come right in and announce the sweetest of news.

Bloody hell!

His godson had been turned into a freaking woman!

Oh for the flying love of humanity, Merlin help us all! How much more could a guy take in his lifetime?!

Sure, he was framed up for a crime he didn't commit.

And sure, following that he was sentenced to life in Azkaban with those godforsaken hooded jerks that just did not give you enough privacy to even cream your pants for crying out loud!

And to think that they were the same bloody creatures who tried to give him the bloody dementor's kiss! Sirius shuddered in disgust. Hooded, ghastly beings were definitely not his type. It didn't surprise

him though. That would definitely explain those overly-exploring hands when he was sleeping at nights in Azkaban... But...You really did not need to know that.

Sirius turned an interesting shade of green at the thought, his eyes going wide with horror.

Holy Merlin! He thought, shaking the thought away.

Oh and of course! Let's not forget the ever-so-wonderful escaped convict years, shall we? Who could, after all, not love being mistaken for being guilty of a crime done by a bloody murderer by the name of Peter Pettigrew, who, by the way, was an extremely tacky jerk who could never match up to Sirius' style.

Why, how could they even think he'd murder those people?!! Sirius could never have done such a horrid thing as blow up a bunch of muggles in a public area! He'd probably do it in a classier way—such as torture, beatings, plain, practiced maniacal laughing with them gawking at him and planning a way out, you know...the usual villainish stuff.

Blowing up people was just way too boring for him.

Oh... Sirius smirked maliciously. That line sounded so sick when you wanted it to be... Sirius smirked wider at the thought. Erm...but you really didn't need to know that didn't you?

Ah...Yes... Yes indeed, those Ministry officials were fools to think Sirius did those murders. And yes...How he missed being chased around wherever he went for such a hideous, tacky crime. And yes, this is sarcasm, folks.

And if that alone wasn't enough, now the fates thought it would be undeniable funny to turn his only self-respecting, admirable and noble godson into a bloody female! A bloody child bearer no doubt! And a gorgeous one at that, according to what he's been told!

Oh yeah, laugh it up now will you? Oh yeah, real funny. Hysterical. Hilarious. Yes indeed, how Sirius love the ways of sarcasm... Hint-Hint.

It wasn't a joke! Well, okay so maybe it was a bit hysterical and he...chuckled a bit when he found out but that wasn't the point!

Harry can't become a girl! You can't just lose a properly-proportioned dick, develop a freaking uterus and grow tits over a couple of minutes! It just wasn't right! Oh, who cares about being right?! It just wasn't humane!

Oh the humanity of it all! What is the world coming to?! Everyone start running for your lives from the attack of the tit-growing disease of death! Save yourselves!!! Er...Ehem!

Sirius coughed loudly, straightening himself. Sorry about that.

Damn.

Lucius Malfoy, the ever-so-amused blonde in front of him, managed a laugh at his face.

Double Damn.

Lucius' sneer grew wider at the look of utter anger on Sirius' handsome face, another chuckle escaping his lips.

Triple Damn.

The blonde looked away, hiding the amusement in his silver eyes as he pretended to engross himself with the numerous paintings in Dumbledore's office. Sirius tightened his fist, his form shaking in pent-up anger.

After a long moment, just when Sirius was about to relax, Malfoy senior smirked again and promptly began to whistle to himself loudly.

Damn...him.

“MALFOY!!!”

Sirius finally snapped and instantly jumped onto the man in front of him, his form automatically altering into his canine body while Lucius could do nothing but gape in surprise, his eyes wide and focused on the teeth Sirius was baring at him in a low growl.

Lucius gulped and gave him a shaky smile, his eyes going ridiculously wide with fear as Sirius bared his fangs again though it seemed, to Lucius, that the marauder was smirking at him as he growled.

“Sirius!”

Sirius immediately froze and changed back to his human form just in time to see Prof. Dumbledore sauntering casually into the office with—oh big surprise here—Malfoy junior behind him, the blonde looking almost as perverted as his father did in front of James Potter.

Sirius blinked. Whatever you do, you did not hear this from him.

Following Draco came the slimy-haired, god of the greasy gits himself, Severus Snape who went positively seething with hatred as soon as he laid his jet-black eyes on Sirius’ face.

Sirius grinned. Oh how he loved just how easily his mere presence could piss Snape off. He swore, it was a gift from the highest heavens.

“Ah. Lucius. Glad to see you here as well. I take it Minerva has already sent you an owl with the news?” Dumbledore asked perkily as he sat down his desk, giving the two men an amused look.

The headmaster’s voice was just enough to startle the marauder back into his senses as he looked back down at Lucius, whom he finally noticed, was still under him from his attack.

Er...Oops.

Sirius smirked and got himself back up, smirking wider when he saw the flustered and humiliated look on Lucius’ face.

“Er... Yes, indeed headmaster. It has come to my attention and though the news has shocked me greatly, I had to come down here and see it for myself to believe it.” Lucius finally managed to say, plopping back down on his seat in one graceful movement.

Snape snarled at this. Why did the Malfoys have to be so damn graceful all the damn time? He swore, it was a lifelong dream of his to ever experience seeing Lucius fall and land flat on his face. Or his arse. Whichever came first.

Snape smirked.

“Well then why don’t we discuss it over a round of tea?” Dumbledore offered merrily, his bright blue eyes twinkling as he easily conjured up the said offer.

Sirius could do nothing but gape and glare at him.

His godson had just been turned into a freaking girl for Merlin’s sake!

He wanted to see some punishment here!

Maybe some torture and castration to the person responsible, that was for sure!

You do not just talk about such an issue as that over a bloody pot of tea like he was planning the boy—er—girl’s bloody engagement party!

Sirius was absolutely fuming now as he instantly snatched the tea cup offered to him and gulped it down immediately before speaking.

“Headmaster, if I may ask...ever so...politely... I am curious after all...” He ignored the derisive snort he perceived coming from Snape’s direction of the room and settled his gaze on Draco, who was staring off into space with no doubt, perverted ideas lingering in his mind.



The boy kept fidgeting with his robes, for the love of Merlin! It was sick!

But to more important matters at hand.

“HOW THE BLOODY HELL DID YOU ALL TURN MY GODSON INTO A BLOODY, BLEEDING, BLOODIED, PMSing FEMALE?!!!” Sirius suddenly exploded, immediately causing all people in the room to jump in surprise as he literally jumped onto the desk and began jostling Dumbledore by the robes.

Draco squeaked and moved his chair away from the enraged man, his eyes darting desperately around the room for a way to escape.

Sirius’ cold gaze immediately shifted to the blonde, narrowing even further just as Dumbledore gave Lucius a merry smile and promptly offered the gaping man a cup of tea.

“Come on, Sirius. After all, you can’t blame a boy for lusting after his rival and thereby fulfilling his own selfish fantasies by turning him into a girl.” Dumbledore said with a smile at Draco, shrugging simply at the thought as though he had announced something as simple as him breathing air.

Sirius’ nostrils flared. He remembered that there was once someone who stated that there was a very thin line between being a genius and being a complete, utter lunatic.

He now knew why that was.

“Headmaster, if I may ask again... Just who is the sick bastard behind this appalling scandal?” Sirius asked calmly this time, slowly taking easy breaths to ease his tense muscles as he slowly sat back down his seat.

“Now, now, Black. I hardly think Severus is a bastard. His mother may have been a bitch but they were definitely married when she got knocked up by the unlucky jerk he calls his father.” Draco answered as-a-matter-of-factly, immediately squeaking again right after as Snape made to lunge at him with raging eyes.

“Father!” Draco scrambled to duck behind his father’s chair, oblivious to Dumbledore’s amused chuckles.

“Don’t you blame this one on me, you sick little Potty-daydreaming pervert! You wanted this to happen didn’t you? You wanted Potter to be a bloody female so that he could bear you a powerful Malfoy heir!” Snape barked at him, lunging at the boy again but he growled as Lucius held him back.

Draco batted his eyelashes in innocence, a smirk growing on his handsome face. “Why Prof. Snape! I am quite shocked you would think I could do such a thing! Of course I didn’t do that to Potter so I could have him...er...her... bear my child.” He drawled, smirking wider at Sirius’ growl.

Prof. Snape blinked in disbelief as Draco looked at him with the most innocent expression he had ever seen that it would have made Neville Longbottom himself look suspicious next to him. He wasn’t fooled though. Oh no, he definitely was not fooled.

Draco blinked and instantly, the innocent expression was replaced by a smug, perverted smile. “I wanted to turn Potter into a bloody female so I could stick my tongue down her mouth, shag her senseless against the nearest wall, marry her hot little ass and then have her bear my children. Plural, mind you.” He quipped but as soon as the words had left his mouth, his voice ended up as a gasp of fear when Sirius Black lunged at him in raging fury, the marauder falling into Snape, who in turn, fell into Lucius, whose chair fell back until all three men were on the floor.

Snape couldn’t have wiped the grin off his face if he tried. Oh happy day! Lucius Malfoy had just fallen ungracefully onto the floor. He laughed hysterically at the situation.

Draco walked away calmly from them, grinning as he took the cup of tea Dumbledore offered him before promptly plopping down onto one of the seats right after.

Dumbledore, no surprise, here, smiled again. "Gentlemen, please. If you would all calmly take a seat and restrict all attempted murders until I have finished talking, I will explain what has happened." He said jovially, gesturing to the three other seats from his desk.

Sirius grumbled and shoved Snape aside as he stood up and settled himself onto the seat beside Draco, his wand now held tightly in his hand and suspiciously readily aimed at Draco's beaming face. Snape nodded calmly and did the same, dusting his robes just as Lucius righted himself again, silver eyes angry with humiliation as he waited and ignored Snape's laughter.

"Well, it appears that we have two people to blame for this rather amusing incident this time. Prof. Snape and young Mister Malfoy here...I believe you have some explaining to do with Harry's godfather?" Dumbledore offered, nodding at Snape.

Snape glowered. "Why do I have to be blamed for this, headmaster? I wasn't the one who made that potion!" He argued.

Draco glared at him. "But you were the one who made Potter take a red-label potion in class as a demonstration, Professor! I'm sure that being a potions master, you would have easily known it if I had accidentally given Potter the wrong potion!" He yelled back.

"Aha! So you admit you gave him the wrong potion!"

"It was an honest mistake and being a student, I can make a mistake!"

"But it was your perverted reasoning changed that blasted boy in the first place!"

"I am not a pervert and he is not a boy!" Draco blinked, rethinking his thoughts. "Wait... That did not sound right." He muttered, shaking his head.

"Mr. Malfoy, kindly explain what has happened. Please." Dumbledore interrupted, rubbing his temples at the sound of their voices echoing through his head.

Draco smirked. “Certainly Professor. See, Prof. Snape here was as usual, making Harry Potter’s life a living hell by humiliating him during class time and me, of course, as usual, I was goggling at Potter’s ass while pretending to be oh-so-honestly interested with the lesson.” He started, examining his fingernails.

Snape gave a low growl under his breath while Lucius smirked as well, the perfect mirror image of his son.

“Well anyway, after discussing red-label potions and the mind transformation potion, Snape thought it would be particularly amusing to make Potter drink some Veritaserum in front of the class. Well, Potter did drink a potion alright but it sure wasn’t the Veritaserum. He accidentally—”

“You sodding liar!” Snape bellowed, now standing up from his seat and towering over Draco.

Draco scoffed, looking mildly indignant. “I do not sod and I do not lie.”

“Silence! Would you let him finish, Severus?!” Dumbledore interrupted again, his eyes darting back and forth between the two Slytherins.

Snape colored while Draco sneered, continuing on. “He drank the mind transformation by mistake— the one I made by the way and well...” This time, Draco blushed. “Since I have been having my own...er... interests in Potter lately, the Potion read my mind and turned him into girl.” He finished, looking uncomfortable.

Sirius snorted. “Oh I’m sure he was much more than that in his interests.” He said snidely, causing Lucius to glare at him.

“Well...Er... That was it basically. He started...” Draco gulped and tried to shift in his seat to hide his growing...er... interest. “He started screaming in pain and twitching around...And then he turned into a girl.” Draco finished looking up to meet the shocked silence.

After a long second or two, he gave an irritated sneer, raising an eyebrow at their expressions. “And they lived happily ever after?” He offered sarcastically, earning himself a reprimanding glare from his father.

“I don’t understand, Professor... Couldn’t you just brew another potion and change Harry back by willing him back into a male?” Sirius pointed out, looking completely desperate as he spoke.

Snape gave him a derisive laugh, shaking his greasy, little, slimy, good-for-nothing, ugly, grotesque—okay! Okay! He was overdoing it. Snape shook his pretty little head. There? Is that better?! Sirius scowled. He seriously hoped sarcasm worked.

“Being in that wretched, dementor-infested prison has obviously infected your brain, Black. You can’t give Potter another mind-transformation potion. The potion can only be ingested once by a single living thing or else, it becomes fatal to the drinker. The process is completely irreversible.” He explained, sounding way too amused for Sirius’ liking.

“Why you good-for-nothing.....”

Draco smirked. He never realized that Sirius Black had such a creative way with words. He briefly wondered if his godson talked dirty like that... Ooh... Now that was a sexy thought. Did Potter like dirty talk?

He briefly wondered if it was normal to daydream this often about his former rival.

“So what you’re saying now is... Harry Potter... savior of the Wizarding World, defeater of Lord Voldemort, last of the influential Potter bloodline, heir to both Godric and Salazar Slytherin and only remaining parseltongue in our time—”

“We get the picture, father.” Draco interrupted Lucius’ suspiciously excited rant, looking amused as he shook his head in dismay.

Lucius glared at his son for the blunt rudeness. Malfoys, if anything, were not rude and did not interrupt anybody else especially if it was a relative.

“Before I was so rudely interrupted... I just need a final confirmation... Harry Potter is now a... woman?” Lucius drawled, his silver eyes widening in surprise.

Sirius and Snape both surprisingly snorted, giving the blonde an annoyed glare. “Well, well... Aren’t you the sharp one, Lucius?” Sirius mocked, rolling his eyes.

But Lucius wasn’t having any of it. He stood up immediately and walked over to the headmaster’s desk, his face grim and serious. “I wish to see this for myself immediately, headmaster.” He stated simply, regarding the two bickering men with an amused look before turning to wink at his son.

Draco winked back, looking surprised to see Dumbledore grinning at the two of them. “Very well then, Lucius. I am thinking he should be waking up any minute now. Oh, pardon me... She is waking up any minute now. If you’d all follow me...” Dumbledore chuckled and got up easily, ignoring the loud shouts coming from both Sirius and Snape across the room.

“OH YEAH, SLIMEBALL?! WELL YOUR HAIR IS SO SLIMY THAT WHEN YOU FALL HEAD FIRST ONTO THE FLOOR, YOU’D PROBABLY SKID ALL THE WAY TO ALASKA!”

Draco sniggered and followed his father out of the office, ignoring the loud insults coming from the two men still arguing inside.

Bloody hell.

\*\*\*

Something did not feel right.

Nope, something definitely did not feel right at all.

Harry squinted up at the bright light shining on his face, trying to make out the features of the environment around him.

Where the bloody hell am I? He thought as he tried to make something out of the irritatingly indistinguishable blurs in front of him.

Something tells me I'm not in Kansas anymore. He thought sarcastically to himself before he tried to sit up, groaning out loud as he raised a hand to hold his throbbing head. His upper head, mind you. Not that he had a lower one now but he didn't exactly know that yet.

Still squinting, Harry was vaguely able to hear faint, obviously ranting voices nearby, causing him to finally sit up straight and look around, finally recognizing the annoyingly, indefinite white of the hospital wing.

Outside, he could hear the screeching voices of Madam Pomfrey and Prof. McGonagall just outside his door, the two women both obviously arguing about something Harry didn't quite understand.

He was, however, able to recognize some snippets of their conversation.

"....bloody girl...!"

"...Potions class...Snape!"

"Malfoy... maker..."

"...Impossible...Absurd...Unbelievable!"

"Greatest scandal... Wizarding World...Newspapers!"

Harry smirked. Or at least, tried to smirk as it only ended up as a pained grimace.

Bloody hell.

His whole body ached. Or rather, his entire form was suspiciously sore all over and he had no bloody idea why.

He slowly stretched and tried to remember what happened, running a hand through his dark hair.

Harry blinked and stopped, running a hand through his raven hair again.

His usually spiked, short black hair.

His hair which he had inherited from his father.

His sleek, mane of...long, suspiciously too femininely silky black hair.

Harry blinked rapidly in panic and shook his head in disbelief. Nope. He was probably just imagining things. It wasn't possible. It just wasn't possible.

Then, his eyes widened again and his now flawlessly shaped red lips split open into a silent, horrified scream of realization.

Potions class... Prof. Snape... Malfoy... That...That freaking potion... the pain....! The... Other stuff that followed...or formed...!

Harry gulped and shut his gaping jaw in a loud snap, shaking his head and again and whimpering in denial when he felt the unmistakable soft curls cascading down his back as his head moved.

Nope. Not possible. Definitely not possible. No bleeding way.

Harry calmly placed a hand over his chest in an attempt to calm his rapidly beating heart, now fully aware of how erratic his breathing had become.

OH...HOLY...MOTHER...OF...MERLIN...

Harry gasped out loud now and slowly placed his hand on his chest again, this time under his shirt, using the hysterically shaking limb to slowly feel the two large lumps on his chest which he knew should definitely not be in there.



OH...BLOODY...HELL...

If he was breathing rapidly before, he definitely was having an alarming asthma attack now. And he didn't even have asthma for crying out loud! No. No, it could not possibly be. There was no way in hell that...those...hideous...THINGS would be there.

Sure, they could be under Hermione's shirt or Cho Chang's shirt or even... He shuddered. Prof. McGonagall's shirt but they definitely, positively could not be under his—Harry James Potter, age 17, savior of the Wizarding World, Heir to Godric Gryffindor, Order of Merlin First class and BLOODY BLEEDING MALE could not have them! No fucking way!

Hysterical?! Of course he was being hysterical! He was delusional! He was now an anticipated patient in St. Mungo's hospital for having officially lost his mind! At age seventeen, Harry Potter was now having a mental breakdown. He knew killing off Voldemort was going to have a psychological effect on him...

Harry winced and gulped again, hastily drawing his shaking hand away from his chest before they discovered anything else.

Then, another thought entered his mind and he gulped again, dropping his glittering emerald green eyes to his now loosened black jeans.

Nope. Don't you think about it, Potter. Don't you dare. You know what you're going to find under there. Nothing has disappeared. You're just imagining things.

Harry inwardly berated himself as he slowly, shakily unbuttoned his pants.

Harry blinked.

He blinked.

He blinked once more.

And you know what else happened?

He blinked some more.

Then, he couldn't help it anymore.

At age seventeen, Harry Potter, savior of the Wizarding World, heir to Godric Gryffindor, Order of Merlin First Class and soon to be St. Mungo Mental patient, screamed.

And quite loudly at that.

And yes, Harry, even as his screaming lungs refused to say it out loud, screamed as a bloody, bleeding female.

And with those last thoughts, our screaming crotch-less hero promptly fell back down onto the bed with a loud thud just as both Prof. McGonagall and Madam Pomfrey rushed into the room.

Bloody hell.

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"Er... I think he's out cold."

Sirius carefully poked at his now boy-turned-girl godson—er—goddaughter as Dumbledore and the others entered the hospital room with curious looks at Prof. McGonagall's hysterical expression.

Sirius gave Lucius a sneer. "Brilliant assumption, Malfoy. It would have taken ages to figure that out without your help." He taunted sarcastically, rolling his dark eyes.

Lucius blinked and raised an eyebrow, shrugging. "Thanks Black."

Sirius blinked. Honestly. Sarcasm was just lost on the blonde man.

Draco sauntered breezily into the room with Snape trailing behind him, his eyes twinkling as he eyed the pale-faced girl now sprawled ungracefully on the bed.

“Er...Is she out?” Draco asked, now smirking at Harry’s unconscious form on the bed.

Sirius snorted. “Draco, you certainly take after your wonderfully intelligent and perceptive father, I see.” He drawled sarcastically, earning himself a puzzled look from the younger Malfoy.

“Thanks.” Draco said, shrugging before turning back to meet Snape’s accusing glare with a taunting grin.

Sirius sighed and rubbed at his temples, unsurprisingly developing a splitting headache. Malfoys... He thought, rolling his eyes.

“Well, seeing that we obviously need Mister—er—Miss Potter awake for this confirmation and discussion, Mr. Malfoy, would you care to do the honors of waking young Harry up?” Dumbledore interrupted, grinning cheekily at a stunned Prof. McGonagall.

“Headmaster, how can you be so calm about this?! My student has just been turned into a girl against his own will!” She shrieked angrily.

“In case you prefer to be grammatically false for eternity, I think you should notice that the proper pronoun to be used for Potter here is she.” Snape drawled sarcastically, a smirk lighting up his face that indicated to Black that he was enjoying this situation all too much.

Sirius growled, forgetting that he was in human form. He would have to deal with that dirty, slimy-haired git later.

Promptly ignoring them all, Draco sneered and bent down to inspect Harry’s form, using a careful figure to prod Harry gently on the arm. Oh Draco wanted to do much more than prod Potter on the arm, he could assure you but he doubted Sirius would like that...Especially in a room full of sodding old people—er...Adults.

Harry groaned and shifted away, slowly opening up one bleary eye to gaze up in a dreamy look at the blonde in front of her, her green orbs filled with confusion at the sight.

Draco, at that very moment, felt his perverse thoughts melt away as a soft smile graced his face, momentarily admiring the beautiful way Harry's delicate eyelashes swept up to reveal those beautiful green eyes peering up innocently at him.

He imagined how life would have felt like to forever have those enchanting emeralds gazing at him with such love and longing as he bent down and gave those oh-so-tempting red lips a soft, chaste kiss of promise.

He imagined what the feeling would have been like to come home to those delicate green eyes every night, seeing that beautiful face light up with a smile when he entered the manor and swept up their beautiful, blonde, green-eyed children in his arms.

But more importantly, he imagined what those beautiful eyes would like in the heated moment of love-making when he took her into his arms and made her his for the first time, that gaze filling with both pleasure and desire as he did.

Draco forgot to imagine one thing though.

He forgot to imagine that those beautiful green eyes, though incredibly innocent, were also incredibly deadly. In a flash, he saw the confusion in Harry's eyes disappear and transform into angry realization as she finally recognized just who was in front of her.

Apparently, zoning out completely had given the Gryffindor enough time to gather her thoughts and remember that this whole uproarious scandal was unsurprisingly his fault.

How stupid of him to neglect such a fact! Harry's eyes were as deadly as they were innocent. And that thought was just so much more hotter than thinking of them as innocent.

Draco easily felt the dirty...Oh yes, very dirty thoughts rushing into his head yet again. Oh and he won't clarify which head this time.

He smirked. "I'm sorry babe but despite the fact that you are very much turning me on with that sexy glare of yours, I am still a Malfoy

and I cannot do such a thing in front of an audience.” He murmured, winking at him.

Oh if looks could kill.

Harry was positively seething mad now, her shoulders rising up and down with every breath she took.

“MALFOY...YOU...WANKING...BASTARD...I...AM...GOING...TO...KILL....YOU...” She hissed in a dangerously low tone, ignoring the other occupants of the room.

Draco’s eyes widened in alarm. It seems he forgot one more important detail. Harry was most definitely female now and females were dangerously overflowing with hormones of emotions.

Harry Potter as a boy was tough enough. But Harry Potter as a PMS-ing girl was definitely going to be hell.

Bloody hell.

“Now, Harry, before you do anything irrational, we must first discuss—”

“ARGH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”

Dumbledore stopped instantly as Harry lunged forward at the blonde Slytherin, immediately tackling the younger Malfoy to the ground with the swiftness of a female tiger, easily pinning the boy onto the floor and straddling his hips with the intention of beheading him clearly found in her eyes.

Draco gulped and desperately tried to focus on keeping his upper head without paying much attention to how his...other one was calling for attention in the process.

Having a very much irate, female Harry Potter straddling him with her form incredibly tense with obvious dominance and power was definitely not something he was expecting.

Oh thank Merlin these robes were so damn loose. He only hoped Potter would be angry enough not to realize how his body was enjoying itself right now.

Draco bit back a groan of desire as he stared up at Harry's piercing gaze.

Harry didn't seem to notice Draco's pale face as she continued to shout out an interesting string of creative curse words at her Slytherin enemy, her slender hands now tightening against the boy's throat.

"YOU FUCKING DEATH-EATER! I AM GOING TO MAKE SURE YOU NEVER HAVE ANY MALFOY HEIRS EVER AGAIN AND I AM GOING TO GUT YOU ALIVE SO PAINFULLY THAT IT'LL MAKE VOLDEMORT JEALOUS!" She screamed again, now repeatedly slapping Draco on the cheek.

Draco barely prevented a loud squeak as Harry grabbed a fistful of his robes and lowered her face so that their lips were almost touching but just as Draco thought she was going to kiss him, Harry turned and whispered something poisonously in his ear.

"You are going to wish you had never been born, Malfoy...I will have your head!" She hissed darkly, her eyes glowing scarily with a tinge in them that somewhat reminded Draco of the dark lord himself.

Draco, despite his growing arousal now, managed a weak smirk as Harry pulled back and glared at him with hard, steely eyes.

"Why muffin... I hardly think this is the place..." He drawled back, fighting a grin of triumph when Harry finally stopped and looked at him in horror, her cheeks tingeing with pink.

"You sick perverted bastard!" She raged again, this time pulling back a tightly clenched fist and managing to sock Draco right in the eye.

Oh that hurt. That one hurt like a mother.

Draco winced and didn't get a chance to respond as another punch made contact with his pale skin, this one directed at his firmly muscled abs.

"Potter!" He protested, trying to protect his handsome face from getting punched again.

Okay, so he realized that him screaming out Potter's name for her to stop sounded incredibly kinky but he did not want Harry damaging his face for it! The face was an irreplaceable work of beauty!

Another punch came at his stomach this time but just as he was finally going to tell Harry to stop, they all heard Dumbledore's amused voice from in front of them, finally drawing Harry's attention to the other people in the room.

Harry stopped immediately and looked up to see several faces looming over them, all of which bearing different expressions on them.

Dumbledore's was one of amusement and laughter while her godfather, who was pale with disgust, looked as though he was having a hard time deciding whether or not he should laugh or faint in shock.

Looking around with a blush on her face, Harry saw Prof. Snape smirking at her as well, his eyes traveling questioningly from her to the very much turned-on Slytherin lying underneath her. Prof. McGonagall was just plain gaping, her eyes ridiculously wide that Harry would have laughed it she wasn't too distraught about her bloody five-minute sex change.

Lucius Malfoy however, whom Harry was very much surprised to see, was looking at her with something Harry could only guess was surprise and hidden excitement as he eyed the very comprising position she was still unknowingly in.

The Gryffindor finally turned back to the boy whom she was currently still straddling, finding Draco smirking up at her in a very suggestive way, his silver eyes traveling from her to where she was sitting on him.

Bloody hell.

Harry gasped in disgust and horror as she made to get off him but just as she did, Dumbledore's voice broke through her thoughts, drawing her attention back to the old man.

"Now Harry... I know that the situation may seem difficult for you to understand at the moment but I—"

Harry's eyes flashed off again, all thoughts of getting off Draco forgotten as she transformed her face into a hideous growl of anger that Sirius could almost literally see the smoke coming from her ears.

"DIFFICULT?! DIFFICULT FOR ME TO UNDERSTAND?! HOW THE BLOODY HELL DO YOU THINK I UNDERSTAND IT THEN, YOU CRACKPOT OLD FOOL?! THE LAST TIME I BLOODY CHECKED, I WAS A BLOODY BOY FOR MERLIN'S SAKE! I HAVE BEEN ONE FOR THE LAST SEVENTEEN YEARS AND NOW YOU THINK I'M JUST GOING TO BLOODY ACCEPT THE FACT THAT I HAVE TURNED INTO A SODDING FEMALE OVERNIGHT BECAUSE OF SOME FUCKED-UP POTION I WASN'T EVEN SUPPOSED TO DRINK?! HOW THE BLOODY HELL DO YOU ALL THINK THAT MAKES ME FEEL?! I WAS BORN A BOY FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! A BOY! A STUPID, SODDING, FUCKED-UP BOY! AND NOW, THANKS TO YOU, SNAPE AND PROBABLY TO MALFOY TOO FOR HANDING ME THE WRONG DAMN POTION, I AM A STUPID, SODDING, FUCKED-UP GIRL! HOW COULD YOU EVEN THINK I COULD HANDLE SOMETHING LIKE THIS CALMLY AND RATIONALLY?!" Harry shrieked at them, causing everyone in the room to gape at her in utter shock

"I CAN NOT BELIEVE THIS! FIRST VOLDEMORT—WHO WAS PRETTY EASY BY THE WAY CONSIDERING I'M THE BLOODY HEIR OF GRYFFINDOR BY BLOOD, THEN IT WAS HAVING ALL THOSE BLOODY FANGIRLS COMING AFTER ME ALL THE DAMN TIME AND HAVING PANSY PARKINSON OF ALL PEOPLE TRYING TO GET INTO MY PANTS! AND NOW! I GET TURNED INTO A GIRL AND WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?! I ACTUALLY HAVE DRACO SODDING MALFOY UNDER ME WHILE HIS BLOODY LOWER



HALF ACTUALLY TELLS ME JUST HOW DIRTY HIS SMIRK REALLY IMPLIES SOMETHING!" She continued, ignoring the sudden blush on Draco's pale cheek.

"AND WHAT DO YOU KNOW?! LET ME GUESS THEN, HEADMASTER! ARE YOU HERE TO TELL ME THAT THE EFFECTS OF THIS SO-CALLED POTION ARE IN FACT PERMANENT AND THAT THE REASON MALFOY SENIOR IS HERE IS BECAUSE HE WANTS ME TO PROCREATE WITH HIS GODFORSAKEN SON?!" She finished, now growling expectantly at Dumbledore with bated breath.

Dumbledore, bless him, managed another smile and gave Harry a shrug, his blue eyes twinkling as it always bloody twinkled when he was completely insane.

"Actually Harry... Yes. The effects of the potion are permanent." He quipped, ignoring the loud cursing coming from Sirius beside him.

Harry paled further, her throat now too sore to speak properly. "B-B-Bloody hell..." She whimpered weakly, her voice now shaky from screaming.

"And yes, Potter. I do come here with an offer for you and my son Draco here to be further acquainted with one another. Privately, this time. I'm sure you have heard of the hunting season tradition. It would be my honor to be able to establish an engagement and a merging between the Potter and Malfoy bloodlines." Lucius spoke casually, giving the brunette a smirk.

Harry absolutely sputtered with terror, her eyes darting to her godfather in sheer desperation. "B—bloody hell..." How much did these people think a boy...Er...girl...could take all in one sitting?!

Oh yeah, she would definitely choose another duel with Voldemort compared to this horrible, terrifying scene any day.

"Now wait just one moment there, Lucius! Don't you dare think that for one minute I am going to allow my godson—er..." Sirius colored at

the slip-up. “Goddaughter to be engaged to your perverted son!” He continued, glaring at Draco.

“Engagement?! The bo—girl obviously needs time to adjust first! Why, she hasn’t even grown accustomed to her new body yet and already you fools talk of engagements and bloodline merging! Now is not the time to discuss this, Lucius!” McGonagall joined in, a massive argument erupting.

“Then why don’t you teach her the exciting ways of female life then, Minerva? She will obviously need to accept the situation somehow seeing that she is forever going to be in that state whether she likes it or not.” Snape countered derisively, snorting in reply.

Bloody hell.

Harry felt the entire room spinning around her. Now forever is a very long time...Isn’t it?

Draco however, found the entire situation hysterical as he listened intently to the arguments in the room while also trying to keep himself in check as he still noted that yes, Harry was still wonderfully straddling him.

“She needs time to think about the entire event first, Severus! The girl has had a traumatizing change of sex and a bloody offer of engagement to her worst enemy all in a span of a few hours! Harry is in no state to hear such things!” McGonagall shrieked back.

“The boy—girl handled Voldemort. I doubt becoming a bloody girl is going to be much of a shock for her.” Snape answered wryly, raising an eyebrow.

“Well if it wasn’t for your potion in the first place this would never have happened!”

“Malfoy was the one who made the potion so it was his own sick mind that changed Potter into what she has now become!” Snape bellowed back.

Harry instantly rounded on Draco, her eyes narrowed. "You?! You made that bloody potion?! Why?!" She demanded, her gaze telling Draco otherwise that he would find no way to escape in answering her question.

Draco opened his mouth to respond but just as he was going to finally confess himself to the Gryffindor, the room to Harry's hospital room banged open to reveal a whole mess of Daily Prophet and other newspaper reporters huddled outside the room, oblivious to Madam Pomfrey's protest.

From the looks of the men and women on the ground fumbling for their magical quills and recorders, it was quite obvious they had heard every single word inside.

Dumbledore's eyes finally lost their cheerfulness and narrowed at them. "Poppy, how could this happen?" He asked calmly, looking at the frantic nurse in question.

Madam Pomfrey shook her head hastily, shrugging in response. "I don't know, headmaster! They all just started rushing in here! Said something about Rita Skeeter telling them of a juicy scandal that had just happened to Harry!" She shouted above the reporters' loud, rushed questions directed at Harry.

Sirius barely prevented himself from changing back into his dog form and chasing them out of the room but the fact that he was an unregistered animagus came into mind.

Er...Perhaps that wasn't such a good idea after all.

Harry and Draco both blinked as the reporters began crowding around them, immediately firing questions at Harry, who appeared to be too stunned and horrified to answer them.

Dumbledore finally spotted the familiar bug on the bedpost, his eyes narrowing knowingly. "Ah... I see..." With a flick of his wand, he instantly trapped the bug into a jar and placed it on the bedside table before turning back to deal with the reporters rushing into the room.

“Harry! How do you feel about your new gender? Do you have any words for your girl fans all over the world when they hear of this shocking scandal?” A woman asked, looking at Harry expectantly.

“Er...” Who would have thought that the savior of the wizarding world was so wonderfully articulate?

“Harry! Would you agree that this horrible event was caused by none other than your Potions master and that he should be fired immediately and severely punished by the Ministry for his professional incompetence by being sent into Azkaban? He did after all give you a red-label potion.” Another reporter prodded, his quill and parchment ready in his hands.

Snape turned red in anger at this. “What?! I assure all of you that this was not my fault but that young blonde’s over there!” He spat out, glaring at Draco who cowered away from the accusation.

“Don’t you dare blame my son for this, Severus!” Lucius spoke up, his silver eyes flashing in challenge.

“Is that so? Well then would you think that the proper punishment for this young man over here would be for the Ministry to snap his wand in half and expel him from school for his behavior?” The reporter asked again, adjusting his glasses.

Draco’s eyes went ridiculously wide with fear. “What wand?!!!!!!” He squeaked, his voice comically high and shaky.

Harry, however, was gazing blankly from one curious face to another, her face a mixture of confusion, anger and utter horror.

Bloody, Bleeding, Sodding Hell.

“All of you get out this instant!” She vaguely heard McGonagall scream above the chaotic crowd of reporters now in the room just as he saw Dumbledore beginning to escort some of them outside, much to Harry’s relief.

She turned back to see Draco again, now looking up at her with a surprisingly guilty expression on his handsome face.

She blinked. Nope. She did not just say that.

“Potter...Er... I know this isn’t the proper time to be saying this and I know this won’t exactly produce you an instant crotch but... Well... I’m...I’m really sorry.” He muttered, his face a combination of a fearful wince and a nervous, quite endearing smile actually.

She blinked again. Nope. She did not think that at all.

Harry looked down and stared into Draco’s silver orbs, her gaze angry and accusing.

“Malfoy—”

FLASH!

The both froze in surprise and turned just in time to see another reporter now being dragged off by Snape towards the door, a large camera clutched tightly in his hands.

“Wonderful pose! Front page material! Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy—blossoming romance!” The reporter exclaimed loudly, holding his camera up at them and nodding enthusiastically in affirmation.

Harry blinked, feeling her heart momentarily stop beating in her chest.

No.

No, no, no, no, no!

That did not just happen!

She did not just get see a reporter take a picture of her straddling her worst enemy between her thighs and she did not just hear him say he was going to post it on the front page!

No, no, no, no, no!!!

Desperate, she looked down and met Draco's eyes again, this time their gaze much more smug and teasing as they gazed up at her.

Bloody hell.

And with that last thought, our savior of the wizarding world, Harry James Potter, age seventeen, heir of Godric Gryffindor, Order of Merlin First class, soon-to-be patient of St. Mungo's hospital, soon-to-be occupant of Azkaban jail cell for killing a certain blonde jerk—cough—Draco Malfoy—cough— and bloody bleeding FEMALE fainted.

She fainted.

Draco smirked and took that opportunity to wrap her in his arms, a perverted smile gracing his perverted handsome face.

Bloody hell.

"Snap Malfoy's wand in half for doing such a crime against our savior! He and Harry have had a rivalry for years haven't they? He probably planned this all for Harry's demise didn't he?" A reporter cried out just before she was shoved outside by a steaming McGonagall.

Draco's face instantly twitched in horror. "Wa-Wa—wand?!" He squeaked, looking up desperately at his father, who was currently locked in a heated argument with Sirius Black.

My wand in...in...half...?

And with that, Draco Lucius Malfoy, age seventeen, self-proclaimed prince of Slytherin, heir to the prestigious Malfoy line and soon-to-be death patient of St. Mungo's hospital when Harry wakes up, fainted.

He fainted.

Bloody hell.

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A/N: Hahahahaha!! Longer than my usual chapters but I liked it nonetheless! I just love the way Harry pounced onto Draco like a female tiger! Talk about dominatrix eh?! Just the way Draco likes em! \*giggles\* And I LOVE Sarcastic!Sirius... He's just so adorable! \*blushes\* Okay, I'll shut up now. THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO REVIEWED! YOU'RE ALL VERY MUCH LOVED AND APPRECIATED! To clarify things, yes, Harry will remain as a girl now (sorry to those who didn't want him to) and yes, he will be keeping his name. I don't like changing his name... it just wouldn't be Harry if I did... \*smiles\* Oh and I hoped the potion was clear after this chapter. It is in fact, permanent since it can only be ingested once by living being. And lastly, Harry will be giving Draco a hard time here... After all, Draco's not the only one hunting now is he? \*winks\* AGAIN, THANKS TO YOU ALL! PLEASE REVIEW AND TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK! LUV YAH! ~slythe~

## Chapter 5 – Repercussions, Insanity and Jellybeans

### The-Girl-Who-Lived?!

No words could explain the stupor I fell into upon laying my eyes on the beautiful seventeen-year-old girl in front of me as I entered the Hogwarts Hospital Wing the night of November 14th just after a fateful incident in a class that would soon become the most tremendous impact on the Wizarding World since the death of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named himself.

Harry James Potter, savior of the Wizarding world at age seventeen, had always been an alluring personality— especially given his charisma and popularity in the Wizarding society. Above everyone else, nothing could have prepared him for the change of events that were to come into his life.

Thus, it is with a heavy heart that I be the first to announce the animosity and the scandal that has fallen upon our world which I unintentionally was most unfortunate to witness.

Harry James Potter, at seventeen years of age, is now indeed a woman.

As I have personally observed prior to the incident, it would seem that coming from a Potions class taught by Professor Severus Snape, the sexual transformation were the effects of the notorious Mind-Transformation Potion— a Ministry red-label potion banned in the 1800s but legalized by the late Minister Grudgemore in 1903 for breeding purposes in the midst of the cattle shortage at the time.

Its recipe traditionally sealed deep in the drawers of the Department of Mysteries, few are capable of brewing such a complicated potion unless one had graduated with a particular and remarkably exceptional skill in the art of potion making and was given the proper research— as well as explanations of the seriousness of its consequences when inflicted upon a human being.



The Mind-Transformation potion, also known as Cirisserum, was first concocted by Grendelin the III, a horrifyingly ugly wizard who had taken immense pleasure in transforming his enemies to look exactly like him before he killed them off. Upon oral intake of an intended victim, the potion allowed the maker to specifically will the transformation of the drinker into any other living form or shape. This served well in the past of being a form of torture or punishment by Dark Wizards — turning one's enemy into the form of an animal — never to be heard from again and assumed dead by society. The change itself is known to be an extremely painful process, killing dozens of wizards and witches subjected to it long before they transformed into the desired shape of the maker.

As can be expected, the effects of the potion were so powerful that to ingest it again would be fatal to the drinker and as such, the effects of such a potion were permanent and irreversible. Any attempt to drink the same potion again to change back successfully disfigured one's form altogether as the body could not withstand another magical manipulation.

Why said potion was particularly in the hands of Professor Snape the day Potter had transformed, however, remains unclear. Sources confirm that alleged rival of Harry—Draco Lucius Malfoy—had been the maker of the Cirisserum. Again, why Malfoy had been allowed to concoct such a dangerous source of dark magic eludes this reporter for the moment as she continues to seek for answers to her questions.

As for the Ministry's decision in all this, a formal hearing of the case has been scheduled at 9:AM today about the proper decisions to be acted upon with regards not only to Harry's new condition and responsibilities but also the suspected makers of the potion in question.

Fortunately, as we take into consideration the upcoming Hunting Season—the longtime traditional practice of pureblooded Wizarding male heirs beginning courtship of a chosen mistress—all of this could also be taken as simply an amusing turn of events. Harry Potter, as the male savior of the Wizarding world and powerful defeater of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, had been admired by hundreds of clamoring young witches everywhere not only for his good looks and

reported charms but also for the intelligence, power, wit and abilities he is rumored to possess.

Now, having all of these qualities and possessing a rather natural charm for attention, it is no doubt that our young Miss Potter will soon find herself the object of many male advances. Let us just hope, for our sake, that the Wizarding World can handle any more of Ms. Potter's erratic life.

Written by: Rita Skeeter

Cursing loudly, Harry hurled the paper across the room, her emerald green eyes ablaze with fury. She couldn't believe the nerve of that woman! It had never been her fault that her life was always screwing her over and making things uncomfortable for the world! It's not like she had ever wanted things like this to happen to her. Her life had always been full of shit.

Sod Skeeter. Sod Malfoy. Sod Snape. Sod Malfoy. Sod Dumbledore. Sod Malfoy. Sod bras. Sod panties. Sod breasts for making it so damn difficult to walk and balance. And damn it, sod Malfoy! She thought furiously, muttering darkly to herself.

She couldn't understand how girls handled these annoying lumps bouncing off the front of their chest. It irritated the hell out of her, especially since she discovered she wasn't exactly lacking in that area. It was extremely difficult to move around freely and it hurt like a bugger to lie down on your stomach—a feat Harry had once loved to do.

Grumbling to herself about, she snatched the next sheet of paper on her bedside table, examining the cover with bated breath.

Big mistake.

There, on the blasted cover of Witch Weekly Magazine, lay exposed the horribly large photograph of her straddling Draco on the floor, the blonde Slytherin looking up at her with an expression Harry could only hope was contempt. A weak, throttled whimper escaped her lips as she hurriedly flipped through the magazine with shaking fingers.

## Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy – Blossoming Romance

by Monica Huppelcook (Society and Gossip)

You heard right, girls! It would seem that both of your favorite, handsome bachelors are more than likely to find themselves in their own relationship from now on as rumor has it—our handsome Gryffindor hero Harry Potter has now been transformed into a beautiful, young woman.

Amusingly enough, the Wizarding World hasn't seen a scandal like this ever since the transformation of Imelda Apherwood in 1907 into the body of her lover—a feat which proved difficult seeing that her lover was certainly not willing to maintain a romantic relationship with someone who looked exactly like him.

Although a heavy disappointment on our parts, let's cross our fingers for these two young lovebirds and watch them carefully as the Hunting Season progresses. It might seem disconcerting at first, this could in effect turn out to be one of the most amusing and ironic fairy tales the Wizarding World has yet to witness.

But don't get your hopes up too early, Mr. Draco Malfoy! Rumor has it that since the news of Harry's sudden transformation has made its proper impact on society, young male Wizards from every corner of the world have begun to sit up and turn their heads in attention to their young potential prey. No doubt, with the effects of the potion, Harry's rumored beauty and most importantly, power and popularity in the Wizarding World, our young Gryffindor seeker is rapidly becoming this season's prime catch.

The hunt is on, boys. Go get her!

Harry groaned and set the magazine down on the bed, one hand going to rub her temples in desperation. What was she going to do now? It was bad enough she had lost all evidence of her once manhood. Now, she would have to be reminded by sodding suitors everywhere from across the globe that she was no longer a male and had to be courted like some hapless princess.

She felt like she was trapped in a cage. Draco Malfoy without his hair gel. Ron Weasley without his red hair. Voldemort without his nose. Oh wait, that last one's normal. Now why did that keep popping up? She shook her head.

The accident had been a week ago and now, as she was locked up in the Hospital Wing on Dumbledore's strict orders, rumors were flying everywhere as to what had happened to the boy-er-girl who lived to be screwed around.

Harry's eyes widened in alarm and horror. Good god. Now she really would be screwed around! She thought in panic, visibly shaking as she sank back onto the bed.

I used to do the screwing! How the hell can I handle being screwed? I screw! Not the other way around! Bloody hell. I'm screwed! No—Wait—Argh!

Harry buried her head into her pillow, muffling a loud, exasperated scream of frustration. What was she going to do now? She had already planned her life to become a powerful Auror. She was supposed to be chasing people! Not the other way around! How would she accomplish that now that she had to bear the snotty children of some hotshot aristocrat?

Sitting up, she pondered the thought carefully, considering her options. It wasn't the fact that she now had to live her life with a man that scared her. Harry had known for quite some time that she was sexually oriented both ways—meaning she liked both girls and boys. She was thoroughly surprised when the Wizarding World was admittedly open to both circumstances, although particularly partial to heterosexual relations for pureblooded families if only for the sake of reproduction.

All of that didn't bother her at all. What bothered her was the fact that – when she thought her life had finally become peaceful – here she was again being attacked with another random challenge in her life which the fates suddenly expect her to handle.

Sure. She had squared off with a maniacal moron who thought it ingenious murder a baby to become invincible and succeed in killing off not only himself but most of his nose—mind you. She had endured countless horrors – most of them involving a humongous reptilian monster hot on her arse in the context of a scream like a wimp or die to save the world principle.

Of course, let's not forget the wonderful discovery of the rodent having been the killer of her parents and the spy of He-Who-Must-Not-Have-A-Nose. This she couldn't explain much; however, as it brought her back her asinine Godfather— whom, at the moment, Harry had figured spent most of his time still passed out cold on the floor of Grimmauld place. Either that or at the Daily Prophet, hacking away at the auspicious reporters and getting ready to go to the hearing later today.

She had been switched genders, for Merlin's sake! No one in their rightmind could have ever fathomed this ever happening to them in their life! No one in all of humanity could have been prepared for the horrible and humiliating experience of losing a dick, growing two huge lumps on your chest and suddenly being hunted by the stupid species you used to belong to! No one!

How the hell could anyoneexpect her to learn to adjust at all? How could anyone expect her to bear children when she had spent a quarter of her life believing she would be the one to implant those little buggers in there?

How the bloody hell do those things come out of a woman anyway? Harry wondered suddenly, her eyes widening as she looked down at the organ in question.

They couldn't possibly fit—? She spluttered again, feeling her form trembling as she took a shaky breath, trying to calm herself. Placing a hand over her chest to calm her racing heart, she yelped and yanked it away again as she came into contact with the two ample mounds on her chest.

And what are 'these' for? If the babies come out there, what are breasts made for? Pillows? Decoration? Harry wondered to herself,

poking at the strange mound of flesh and instantly reddening like a tomato, hastily checking the room to make sure no one had seen her.

Wait a minute, what am I ashamed about? These are 'my' breasts. I'll poke them whenever the hell I want to! She thought stubbornly, poking them repeatedly to prove her point.

Then, wincing, she stopped and rubbed the sore spot, the flush on her face darkening because of her foolishness. Well. Now I know not to do 'that'. She thought, wincing again.

Curious, Harry looked around the room for a split second again before she hopped off the bed, keening slightly as she tried to balance the additional weight on her front.

This must be what Snape feels when he tries to balance the additional weight from his nose. She thought huffily, making her way across the hospital room over to the large mirror in the bathroom.

A mental image of Snape falling over on his nose entered her thoughts and a giggle escaped her lips, instantly causing Harry to slap a hand over her mouth in horror.

She did NOT just giggle. She did NOT.

Inspecting herself closely in the mirror, Harry lifted her eyebrows in surprise, taking into account her new feminine features. Her hair had grown excessively, falling very gracefully just below her shoulders. As a boy, she had always had to tame her hair with magic spells. Now, however, the length of her hair seemed to have tamed its wildness as each strand fell easily into place no matter which way she turned her head.

Her eyes wide with curiosity, she noticed the cute side bangs that fell into her delicate green eyes along with the way her hair actually fell in different lengths and framed her oval-shaped face perfectly, making her pale features stand out.

Tilting her head slightly, Harry leaned closer and inspected the long, flirty lashes that adorned her bright eyes and the aristocratic

cheekbones she knew had inherited from her mother. Her lips hadn't changed much except for the fact that they had a natural, endearing pink gloss now and were more femininely formed.

Stepping slightly back, she examined her body shape next, looking more surprised with what she saw. Although not unusually large, Harry could tell she did have a rather attractive chest area as well as a surprisingly slim waist, giving full emphasis to the graceful curve of her hips.

Harry whistled.

She couldn't help it.

She started checking herself out.

As a boy, no doubt, she would have definitely hit on a girl who looked like her right now.

Bloody Merlin's Hell. She thought, goggling at herself with wide eyes.

She wasn't exaggeratingly thin like most females aspired to be yet she wasn't exactly too curvy either. Her female body was— Just right. Harry thought, turning around and inspecting the view from the back.

Filled out in all the right areas. She thought appreciatively as she noticed her own rounded bottom and smooth, slim legs. Harry had been moderately tall for a boy and since the potion seemed not to have altered much of her height, she was now slightly taller than most other females her age. She noticed this as she inspected her endlessly long legs, which she knew, would draw a lot of male attention and female envy.

Bloody hell! This is so unfair... I see a hot girl and I can't date her because she's me! This is so typical for my life! Harry thought darkly, a sullen expression on her face as she retreated back to her hospital bed and sank back down, a scowl on her face.

No wonder those bloody hormonal teenagers see me as a fresh piece of meat. I am one! Do none of them remember I'm the witless moron

who saved their arses from that raving lunatic Voldemort? Nooo.. When they look at me now, all they see is a hot piece of arse. That's all they see now. She continued to sulk sullenly, burying her face into her hands.

What am I going to do now? I've lived my entire life as a boy. How can I suddenly accept being a girl? I don't have the right philosophies and principles to be a girl now! Certainly not after 17 years of male adolescence! Harry thought to herself, trying to control her emotions.

Maybe I'm overreacting. I mean... how different could it possibly be? Harry thought, considering her options Well there's the sex part. And the peeing part. Er-okay. Uhm. There's the bra— Wait, did she really need to follow that? If all it did was support then maybe— Harry looked down her shirt.

She winced.

Er. Alright, then there's the bra part.

The once in a month thing.

Harry blinked. Oh yeah. She forgot to ask Hermione exactly what that once in a month thing was. But how bad could that be to wearing a bra and biologically intrusive female knickers?

Harry fused her eyebrows together.

Of course all the female hygiene rituals would be incredibly new to her. It took girls hours to get dressed.

She shuddered. The horrors of the female world. Harry Potter had certainly her darkest enemy as of yet and none of the trials ahead of her would ever compare to her encounter with Lord Voldemort.

Harry's eyes widened as she sat up, looking around the room with crazed wide eyes.

That's it! This was a completely different realm of evil altogether! And she was caught right in the middle of it! Surely Dumbledore was



somewhere around here about to give her supposedly words of wisdom while she tried to ponder on the mystery of his words to solve the alleged mystery ahead!

She looked around the room for a message or trace of the old Wizard, checking furiously under the pillows and the blankets. Then she stopped as another idea hit her.

This was all Voldemort's illusion! She wasn't really girl! He just wants her to believe she is so he can plan his attack for when he would suddenly pop up out of nowhere from being the parasite of the back of someone's face! Or arse!

Harry narrowed her eyes suspiciously, searching every crook and corner of the room. He was here somewhere, that bloody bastard! Or maybe Malfoy was the new Voldemort and his supposed sudden gender transformation was his first plan of attack!

Elated at how she had ingeniously seen through the whole scheme, she ran hastily to the nearby door and was about to open it when—

“Aaaaaaargh!”

“Arrrrrrgh!!!!”

Harry fell back and pointed her wand at the new approaching brown-haired Dark Lord, her hand shaking but otherwise firm.

“Come fight me, dark descendant of Lord Voldemort! I invoke thee, show yourself!” She proclaimed maniacally, her loud voice echoing in the room.

The irritated and incredulous face of Hermione Granger stared back at her, the other girl's eyes wide with disbelief, amusement and concern.

“Harry?! What on earth are you talking about? You scared me!” Hermione spoke carefully, an eyebrow raised in slight amusement as she tried to gauge the condition of the raven-haired Gryffindor on the floor.

“Hermione! What are you doing?! Bring out your wand! The Dark Lord approaches! He has come to rid the world of all who oppose him by turning them all into hot pieces of meat!” Harry proclaimed hysterically, yanking Hermione down onto the floor beside her and shutting the door, using a locking charm to seal it.

“Hey! Who shut the door on me?” Came the familiar voice of Ron Weasley from the other side followed by several knocks.

“Harry—Would you stop this?! You’re acting completely off your rocker!” Hermione tutted, getting up and moving over to open the door for Ron when Harry raced in front of her and blocked the doorway with both hands, shaking her head profusely.

“Do not be fooled, Hermione! Our intruder only sounds like our dear friend Ronald but he is Lord Voldemort in disguise! We must ready our defenses and plan our attack!” Harry told her furiously, shaking her outstretched wand in front of Hermione’s face to emphasize her point.

Hermione was not amused.

“Harry? Can I borrow your wand?” Hermione asked sweetly, giving the other girl a calm smile.

“Certainly, Hermione. Show me the strength of your magical abilities!” Harry answered, handing her the wand with a triumphant smile.

“Thank you. Alright. Here goes.” Hermione replied, raising the wand and pointing it at the door.

“Hermione? Harry? What’s going on in there?” Ron voice asked in confusion outside the room as he began knocking louder on the door.

“Wouldn’t you like to know, Voldemort?!” Harry shouted back, looking pleased with herself.

Hermione turned to give Harry one more dubious look of concern.

“Petrificus Totalus.”

With that, Harry promptly stiffened and flopped back rather ungracefully to the floor, leaving a perfect view of Hermione’s exasperated but otherwise admonishing look of irritation.

“Oh, hold on Ron!” She snapped as she turned to open the door amidst all of Ron’s heavy knocking, causing the redhead to accidentally knock onto the brunette’s head instead.

“Watch it!”

“Whoops. Sorry, ‘Mione.” Ron apologized, giving her a sheepish smile before surveying the black-haired Gryffindor frozen on the floor, an incredulous look on his face.

“Same as yesterday?”

Hermione sighed and rolled her eyes, shaking her head as she helped Ron carry a petrified Harry back to the bed where they tucked the unmoving figure of the girl between the blankets.

“Nope. Last time she thought she had somehow broken through the barrier of the Space and Time continuum and had plunged herself into the Twilight zone where everybody had been switched genders. And before that, she thought she was on one of those reality comedy prank shows and spent about half an hour trying to lure the host out from under the pillow” Hermione explained in annoyance, tutting her disapproval.

It was obvious that Ron was trying to contain his laughter as he sat down on the chair next to the bed, looking at Hermione with an innocent grin.

“And now?”

“She thinks this is all some scheme of Voldemort who plans on taking over the world by turning everyone into... hot pieces of meat.” Came Hermione’s blunt but otherwise deadpan answer, causing Ron to guffaw loudly in his seat.

"It's not funny, Ronald! This is getting serious, here! Harry is having series bouts of denial! We have to explain to her the seriousness of the situation! Otherwise, she'll never be admitted out of the hospital wing!" Hermione snapped at him, placing all of Harry's required assignments on the bedside table.

Ron made a face, looking disturbed. "You know it still bothers me you're so comfortable in referring to Harry as a she." He commented, looking at the currently petrified Gryffindor in question.

"Well in case you haven't noticed, Ron— Our best friend is now most definitely a she and will be for the remainder of her life. It wouldn't do us, most of all Harry, to still refer to her as a he. We have to make the best out of the given situation whether we want to or not." Hermione informed him, walking over to the edge of the bed and adjusting Harry's hair into place.

"Well I can't help it, 'Mione! My best mate just turned into a bloody girl for Merlin's sake! You can't expect me to just treat him-bugger—her the same way! It just wouldn't be the same!" He protested, looking grim.

Hermione gave him a confused look, not fully understanding.

"What are you talking about, Ron? She's still the same Harry underneath. Nothing's changed. Just the fact that Harry's...well... a girl now." Hermione told him carefully, trying to comfort him.

"I know that. It's just... Well.. There are certain rules we guys have to watch out for when dealing with women... You know? Rules of respect and propriety that we have to remember. It's not like dealing with fellow guys." Ron tried to explain to her, choosing his words carefully lest he invoke the feminist in Hermione.

"How so, Ron?" Hermione asked, truly curious as she sat down beside Harry on the bed.

“Well... Like now, I wouldn’t be able to talk to Harry about girls and stuff. Since he—damnit—she! Since she’s a girl now, it would be weird to talk to her about how I like this girl’s arse and such—”

Hermione winced and shook her head furiously, covering her ears.

“That was more than I ever needed to know.”

Ron nodded hastily, giving her a pointed look. “Exactly! See, exactly my point! I can’t talk to girls about stuff like that! Those are guy conversations! Something I’ll never have with Harry again.” He complained, slumping down onto his chair.

Hermione gave him an amused smile and opened her mouth to respond when they heard a loud, irritated but otherwise incoherent whine from Harry’s form indicating that she had been waiting for them to change her back to normal.

“Only if you promise you’ve calmed down and stopped blurting out nonsense.” Hermione told her firmly, looking at Harry with an admonishing glare.

The look on the other girl’s face asserted her agreement and Hermione obliged, removing the spell and causing the dark-haired Gryffindor to sit up immediately, stretching her form.

“Sure. Don’t worry about me. I’m perfectly fine listening to the both of you and waiting for one of you to release me.” Harry snapped irritably, stretching her muscles.

Ron and Hermione both gave her apologetic smiles.

“Sorry mate. Guess we wanted to make sure you’d calmed down first before we released you again. Hermione’s right. You have been going off on insane episodes of your own these past few days.” Ron told her, patting her arm.

Harry huffed, narrowing her eyes.

"Well can you really blame me? Does anybody else besides me think that this is all a bit too much for me too accept calmly and rationally all of a sudden? I mean, I've experienced a lot of pretty scary rubbish in my day but this is completely over the top!" Harry grumbled loudly, snatching the pint of ice cream offered to calm her from Hermione's outstretched hand.

She didn't know why but ever since she had been turned into a girl, she had been incessantly craving for every kind of sweet snack she could get her hands on from chocolates to ice cream and even pastries. Not to mention the rollercoaster ride of emotions she found herself currently on as she moved from one mood to another in a quick span of fifteen minutes.

"Ron's right, Harry. You've got to calm down. We know you're going through a very rough time with all the changes to consider right now...and no one is forcing you to accept them right away. All we want is for you to calm down." Hermione started, giving Harry a serious but gentle look.

Harry growled her protest but allowed her best friend to continue, knowing the brunette was right. As always.

"Take everything in slowly if you must. But please, Harry. Stop trying to find ways to get around the truth of the matter because whether you like it or not, you are a girl." Hermione concluded slowly, watching the explosion of emotions on Harry's face.

"Whoa. What's wrong with your face, mate?" Ron asked in slight disturbance, edging slightly away from the black-haired girl in alarm.

Harry didn't answer him, merely whimpering and drowning herself in her ice cream.

Then, before Ron or Hermione could say anything, she suddenly burst into tears, shoving the ice cream aside and burying her face into her pillow.

Ron looked utterly terrified now and backed away but Hermione rushed over to the crying girl, setting the pint of ice cream back on the table before moving closer to her sobbing friend.

“B-bloody hell. This is insanity! Maybe I’m in the alternate dimension!” Ron stammered, watching warily as Hermione gathered Harry into her arms, rocking the other girl back and forth.

“There, there, Harry. Everything is going to be alright. Ron and I are here for you. We won’t let you do this, alone. You’ll be okay, you’ll see. I promise. I’ll help you through everything. You’ll be just fine.” Hermione soothed gently, rubbing circles on the girl’s back as Harry sniffled into her, crying softly.

“I-I... Wh-why do these things always happen to me? Why c-can’t I just h-have a normal life, Hermione? I n-never asked for a-anything else? Just a n-normal life...” Harry cried onto her, her voice trembling and her beautiful face looking so disheartened that even Ron couldn’t resist the urge to melt at the heartbreaking sight.

He edged closer to the two crying girls, unsure of what to do. Finally, he placed an unsure hand on Harry’s mane of black hair, stroking her head very gently in a gesture of comfort.

“Shhh. I know, Harry.” Hermione answered, hugging the girl tighter and giving Ron a look of gratitude for his mature efforts.

“H-how could this h-happen to me? I d-don’t know what to do... I’m n-not a girl... I d-don’t know anything a-about being a g-g-girl! I-I’m not e-exactly a b-boy now either! W-what am I, H-Hermione? I’m a f-freak!” She blurted out, crying harder as Ron winced, doing nothing but stroking her hair.

“You’re not a freak, Harry. You were a smart, handsome, and warm-hearted boy before all this. Now, you’re simply a smart, beautiful and warm-hearted girl whom everyone will adore and love just the same.” Hermione told her, giving the girl a sisterly yet strangely protective kiss on the forehead.

Harry relaxed slightly but sniffed, continuing her rant.

“Wh-why does everyone s-seem to m-make a joke out of t-the f-fuck-ups of my life? M-my entire l-life’s one b-big joke! I d-don’t know what I a-am anymore... My e-entire life’s just s-so screwed up... L-life h-has done nothing b-but p-play me around in c-circles and watch me s-squirm!”

“Shhh. Harry, please. Stop doing this to yourself.” Hermione told her, looking to Ron for help but Ron gave her a blank stare, looking as helpless as she felt.

“I’m a j-joke! I’m c-can’t do this, Hermione. I d-don’t even understand my own emotions! I mean, look at me! I’m crying l-like a...like a...”

“Like a girl, mate?” Ron offered rather bluntly, immediately regretting his interruption when he caught sight of Hermione’s reprimanding glare.

“Er...” Ron looked nervous, his eyes darting from one girl to another.

Harry stopped for a long moment, blinking. Hermione held her breath, almost sure the other girl would explode into a fury of girl hormones once more but instead, the brunette nearly fell off the bed when Harry began to laugh softly, her shoulders shaking.

“Harry?” Hermione asked in confusion, watching as the girl in question began to laugh harder, dissolving into the bed in a fit of giggles just as Ron looked at her as if she was insane.

“Mione... He’s doing it again! The crazy bit! He’s doing it again!” Ron whined in fear, edging away from Harry but Harry only shook her head, still laughing.

“For the last time, it’s she, Ronald and I don’t know why Harry’s laughing!” Hermione snapped in panic, watching her giggling best friend in alarm.



“Hahaha... No, wait—Hermione! Hahaha— I’m not going crazy!” Harry tried to wheeze out, taking deep gulps of air before stopping, a grin on her face as she turned to Ron.

“T-Thanks... I-I... I just really needed that good laugh, Ron.” Harry started, oblivious to Ron’s utterly bewildered expression.

“I really was crying like a girl, anyway. It couldn’t help to point it out for me. Hahaha. I guess I really do need to cope with this the best way I know how.” Harry added, slightly more serious now as she gave both Hermione and Ron a grateful smile.

“Thanks you two. I’ll... get through this. It’ll take some time to get used to...And I’ll be needing both your help... But I’ll try to get through this. I think—no—I know I can.” Harry finally managed to say, taking another deep breath before allowing a genuine smile, much to Hermione’s great relief as she smiled back.

“And hey... If I have to kick dark wizard arse as girl... Then I’ll do so as the best damn female Auror this world has ever seen.” Harry assured them, giving them a reckless grin.

Ron grinned back, clapping his best friend hard on the back, causing the boy-turned-girl to wince in pain.

“That’s the spirit, mate!” He encouraged, chuckling slightly.

Harry looked at him. “Ron?”

“Yes, Harry?”

“I’m a girl now. You can’t slap me like that. It bloody hurts. You do that again, I’ll kick you in the where it hurts. Understood?” She said sweetly, much to Ron’s chagrin as he spluttered in apology.

Hermione giggled and rushed over to hug her friend, lingering slightly to give her an encouraging squeeze. She leaned over to whisper something she didn’t want Ron to hear.

“You’re doing to do just fine, Harry. You’re going to make one beautiful woman. Outside as well as in.” She told her friend, squeezing her again.

Harry squeezed her back, female hormones causing her to tear up slightly again. “I can only hope to measure up to the woman you are, Hermione.” She answered softly, pulling back to give her friend a warm smile.

And as can be expected, this tender scene of female warmth friendship is to be broken by an ever so simple and oblivious bout of masculine companionship.

“It’s this simple, Harry. You’re still my best mate—and the best damn seeker Hogwarts has ever seen—whether you have a dick or not. But seriously...can we eat now?” Ron asked out loud just before they heard his loud stomach rumbling, causing both girls to laugh in response.

Sirius Black was not a happy godfather.

He had just gotten back from his trial with the Ministry of Magic and had cursed everything in sight on the way back to Hogwarts, accidentally apparating about 10 miles away from the school entrance right into the bedroom of an unfortunate muggle couple whom he was sure were definitely not happy at having a dark-haired wizard pop into their bedroom while they were...busy.

The Ex-Gryffindor winced, remembering the horrible scene he had witnessed. Well that’s certainly an experience. He thought, shaking his head at the thought.

It reminded him of the unfortunate times he had walked in on James and Lily back in their Hogwarts days and he witnessed the horrifying site of his best friend in a position he certainly never expected—nor wanted—to see in this lifetime. Or any other life time for that matter.

He scowled under his breath as he made his way into the castle, ignoring the curious glances of the other Hogwarts students and the hushed whispers he heard around him as he passed.

Visibly annoyed, he turned to look at a group of Hufflepuffs who were blatantly staring at him just outside the entrance to the Hospital Wing.

“What are you Hufflepuffs hoofling about?! Don’t you know who I am?! I’m Sirius Black— deadly serious ex-convict, Azkaban escapee extraordinaire—descended from a long line of raving, pureblooded lunatics! I make wise-crack jokes about Severus Snape, Lucius Malfoy and Lord Voldemort! SCRAM!” He growled, causing the Hufflepuffs to scream like little girls and scatter, some of the younger years bursting into tears.

Sirius smirked. Yep. He still had it.

A self-satisfied smile still on his face, he entered the Hospital Wing quietly, his eyes searching the room for his distraught godson—er—girl.

Argh. He would never get used to that.

“Harry?” He called uncertainly, peering through the curtains around several beds he saw in the room.

“Over here, Paddy.” Came the dejected voice of his godson—daughter from the far corner of the room where a single bed lay near the window, several curtains pulled around it tightly to avoid being seen.

Sirius smiled sadly at the affectionate nickname Harry had given him— a cross between Padfoot and Daddy, which was—in fact—what he had become to Harry after the war. A father.

That was probably the reason he had been so angry with all that had happened recently. Being the only ones left for each other, He and Harry had become very close the summer after the final battle. They were the best of friends even then but after the war, Harry grew to love him as a father and Sirius grew to love him as his own son.

He hated the fact that even after the death of Voldemort, the Wizarding world was still making his goddaughter—Ha! He got it!

Daughter. He hated the way the Wizarding world was still making his goddaughter suffer.

"You alright, kiddo?" Sirius asked softly, his voice softening and his anger disappearing at the sight of Harry, who was currently sitting up in her bed, her expression desolate and helpless. Ron and Hermione were seated on two separate chairs beside her, obviously comforting their friend.

Although Harry's eyes brightened slightly at the sight of her godfather, she patted the spot beside her on the bed, her smile grim.

"How as the trial?" She asked him, her voice steady but obviously dripping with nervousness.

Sirius hesitated for a moment before he sat down, planting an affectionate kiss on her head. "Er... Well, Snivellus' nose was abnormally larger than usual... It had a large wart right on the center. I was staring at it the entire time he was testifying to the Minister." He quipped, causing both Ron and Hermione to laugh and Harry to crack a weak smile.

"They were let go, weren't they?" She asked bluntly, looking right at him.

Sirius nodded, looking both apologetic and furious.

"Malfoy... He has supporters inside the Ministry of Magic. He made sure the charges were dropped against his son and Snape! Something about...A faultless accident. My godson gets turned into a bloody female and they call it a faultless accident?! The only faultless accident is the accident of placing that bumbling buffoon Fudge as the minister of magic!" Sirius ranted, his dark eyes flashing angrily.

Harry sighed but shook her head, burying her face in his hands. "Forget it, Paddy... nothing we can do about it now...I've become a woman. I have to start accepting that fact." She mumbled, causing Hermione to look up from the book she was reading.

“But Sirius is right, Harry! They can’t just excuse your case like that. We’re talking about a serious change in your life here... Somebody has to take the consequences.” Hermione told her, looking concerned.

“Look, Hermione... It’s just like you said this morning when you dropped off my assignments... I have to face my life sooner or later. I’ve already hidden from it the entire week by locking myself up in the hospital wing. It’s time to face the world...I’m still me. I’ve only changed genders. I’m still the same person.” Harry told her, causing Ron to look at her in suspicion.

“But Harry... Does that mean you’ll have to date men now?” He asked candidly, causing Sirius’ sharp eyes to round instantly on him.

“How dare you bombard my godson--daughter with such accusations! Harry doesn’t have to answer that question, Weasley!” The older man growled, causing Ron to quiver and back away slightly in fear.

“Paddy! Stop!” Harry called out, holding Sirius back by his arm and shaking her head. Sirius turned to look at her, looking confused.

“Look. Ron’s right. I have to make that part of myself clear, now. Since I am a girl, people will be asking questions. I have to be able to answer them.” She said, looking grim but calmly determined.

Sirius blinked, looking intently at her.

“But Harry—”

“I’m glad to see you taking this situation so elegantly, Ms. Potter. It is a very admirable thing to do.”

All four of them turned to see who had interrupted Sirius’ tirade only to see the smiling face of Albus Dumbledore walking into the room, his eyes annoyingly twinkling like it did all the bloody time. Harry watched in silence as Dumbledore took the seat beside Ron, much to the redhead’s discomfort

Doesn’t the old man ever stop smiling? Wonder what he does that keeps him so happy...Sirius thought, shaking his head. Then Sirius

stopped, his eyes widening at the thoughts that flooded his mind in answer to that question.

Bad image. Bad image. He shut his eyes immediately in horror, burying his face into Harry's pillow. Harry rolled her eyes at her godfather and waited for the headmaster to speak again, knowing the older man had important matters on his mind.

"Harry... I'm sure Sirius has informed you of the events of the Ministry trial this morning...?" Dumbledore asked, waiting for the raven-haired girl to nod before he continued.

"Ah. Wonderful god-parenting, Sirius. In any case, I do believe we have serious legal matters to discuss here. As such, Harry James Potter, you must be re-registered into the Wizarding world. Surely, you cannot keep your old identity as obviously, a lot of matters have to be considered following the events of the past week." Dumbledore explained, pausing shortly to procure a bright yellow jellybean from his pocket.

"Drop of honey?" He offered cheerfully, causing Sirius to snort and all the Gryffindors to shake their head, dumbfounded.

"Ah, well... As I was saying, legal matters have to be corrected and legalized. As of now, you are registered in the Wizarding documents as Mr. Harry James Potter— son of James and Lily Potter and regal heir to the Potter line." Dumbledore continued, looking thoughtful as he chewed on his jellybean.

"What's wrong with that? All of it is still true!" Sirius snapped defensively, causing Harry to pat his arm again to restrain him. Ron and Hermione were whispering to each other but otherwise refusing to speak out, looking uncertain.

"Go on, headmaster." Harry spoke softly, almost in resignation, as she waited for the repercussions she knew she had to face.

"Of course your Godfather is right, Harry. All of what I said are still very much true. However, as circumstances have induced, there are slight amendments we have to consider. Such as...the issue of your

name for instance...Have you decided on anything?" Dumbledore asked him, giving the girl a smile.

Sirius exploded again, his nostrils flaring. "As Harry's godfather, I refuse to have h-her change her name! Harry James Potter was the name chosen by James and Lily Potter and that is the name Harry will use until her death!" He roared, his chest heaving in exhaustion.

"Paddy, please. Let me speak for myself, I may have lost my manhood but I haven't lost my ability to speak." Harry commented sarcastically, and Sirius had the grace to look slightly sheepish.

"Does Harry have to change her name, Headmaster?" Hermione asked curiously, giving Sirius an admonishing look.

Dumbledore simply gave her an enthusiastic smile, shaking his head. "Of course not, Ms. Granger. If Harry wishes to retain her birth name, she may do so. She only has to confirm that she will. Along with other legal matters." He explained, chuckling.

"Legal matters such as...?" Ron asked, looking slightly aghast for his best friend.

"Well... As a female, Harry will be needing an official go-between in matters of marital contracts and agreements. Given that Harry is now an eligible seventeen year old female, she has easily become another prospect in this year's Wizarding Hunting season... She will need a go-between to arrange her potential availability to willing suitors as well as families."

With that, Harry simply fell out of her bed, sputtering in horror.

"Wha-What?!"

She blinked several times, almost certain Dumbledore was going to disappear like a horrible dream. Or that the old wizard would be turning into a dementor.

No such luck.

Dumbledore gave her a calm smile, waiting for her to adjust to the idea.

"A go-between, Harry. It is customary in the Wizarding World for a young lady to have her courtship officiated by a trusted guardian or relative. Somewhat like an intermediary if you will... Between you and your potential partners." He told her, causing Ron to snicker behind his hand and Hermione to give Harry a sympathetic look.

"H-How...? H-Hermione? Is this true? Why didn't you tell me about this...?" Harry wheezed out, her voice cracking slightly.

Hermione winced but nodded, looking sheepish. "I'm afraid it is, Harry. I asked Professor McGonagall to handle my courtship for me seeing as my parents can't officiate as muggles. She's been doing an excellent job, by the way... Successfully scaring off unworthy suitors with her strict requirements." She explained, giggling nervously.

"A-and I have to find a go-between...?" Harry stuttered, trying to find the right words.

Sirius looked slightly put out, poking the girl from behind to get her attention.

"Hey, I object, Harry. What about me? I'm your godfather, I deserve to be your go-between... I plan on giving any perverted male hell for wanting to marry you." Sirius mentioned, slightly cheering up at the idea of watching out for the welfare of his goddaughter.

Harry blinked but gave Sirius an apologetic smile. "Of course I'd choose you to be my go-between, Paddy. I wouldn't want anyone else. It's just that...well.. the idea of being courted just irks me a bit." Harry admitted, sighing.

Sirius planted a comforting kiss on her forehead before ruffling her hair causing Harry to sigh again and turn to Dumbledore, shrugging weakly. "So... What exactly is it that Sirius is supposed to do for me, Professor?" She asked, a dejected tone in her voice.



Dumbledore looked thoughtful for a minute. "Well... I can't exactly answer that, Harry. Those roles vary from every family... Personally, I would suggest that you leave to Sirius the important task of introducing you to WIZARDING society." Dumbledore answered, popping another jellybean into his mouth.

I'm going to shove those bloody jellybeans up his perky, hairy nose. Harry thought darkly, her eyes dark with impatience.

"Harry doesn't need to be introduced anymore, she's popular enough as it is!" Ron pointed out, causing both Harry and Hermione to shoot him dirty looks.

"No, Ron. That wasn't what Professor Dumbledore meant. He meant Sirius has to help Harry with her WIZARDING debut." Hermione told him, causing Ron's eyes to widen in comprehension before nodding in agreement.

"My what??" Harry blurted out but no one heard her, much to her dismay.

Dumbledore looked thoroughly delighted now as he spoke. "Correct, Ms. Granger. Not only that, though." With that, he turned to Sirius, who looked both thrilled and hassled at the idea of handling his goddaughter's debut.

"Sirius, you'll also be in charge of explaining the events of what happened to everyone. You will make the announcement to the WIZARDING world. You will also be arranging meetings and interview sessions with other parents of willing suitors vouching for Harry—which I am positive will be quite a handful." He added with a chuckle, causing Harry's face to redden in shame.

"As you will soon learn, Harry... In the WIZARDING world, before the hunting season, ladies of age seventeen all debut at the same time in one main event arranged by their respective schools. For Hogwarts, this debut will be held in the Great Hall next month following the night of the full moon. As such, all seventeen year old witches—accompanied by their parents or go-betweens will be introduced the same night to a grand gala of guests and interested suitors invited

from other schools all over the world.” Dumbledore explained, stopping when he noticed the overwhelmed look on Harry’s face.

“H-how... H-how do you all e-expect me t-to take this in all a-at once?” She stammered, falling back against her pillow with a dazed look on her flushed face.

Hermione gave her a comforting smile, feeling sorry for her friend.

“It’s not so bad, Harry. At least we’ll be debuting together...right? Besides, I’ll help you learn everything you need to know before the event. It’s really not as bad as it sounds.” She reasoned weakly but Harry didn’t respond, the other girl merely staring off into space.

“Yeah... Cheer up, Prongsie. Everything will be alright... You know I won’t let you down. I’ll take good care of you... If I had a choice, no one deserves to marry you. It’ll take a perfect suitor to win my favor.” Sirius kidded, causing Harry to laugh weakly.

“Harry... I understand this may all be difficult for you to understand right now. But I assure you that it is all for the best. You trust Sirius completely... He will not do anything against his better judgment.” Dumbledore consoled kindly, reaching over and patting Harry on the arm.

“I suppose... Professor... How am I to do this...? I... I know nothing about being a girl. How can I learn everything there is in time for the debut next month? I mean, Hermione’s been a girl all her life so she won’t have anything to worry about. I’ve been a girl for one week. Surely, I can be excused from the debut...?” She asked but Dumbledore merely shook his head.

“Of course not, Harry. This is a tradition for every young witch when she reaches seventeen. A rite of passage, if you will. I am fairly certain you will be ready by then. Sirius will take good care of you.” The elder wizard assured him, giving her a smile.

“As for being a girl, not to worry... I have asked our very own Professor McGonagall to assist you in all necessary matters of the feminine world. She has agreed to give you private lessons starting

Monday... Right after your last class.” He added, his eyes twinkling merrily in amusement.

Harry felt a headache coming on at the prospect of having to learn womanly matters from Professor McGonagall of all people but kept silent, knowing she no longer had a say in the matter.

“As for wardrobe... Hmm... I don’t suppose—”

“I will be providing for all of Harry’s basic necessities. I’ll make sure he—sorry—she gets a new set of clothes and accessories for her new lifestyle. You need not worry about that, Headmaster.” Sirius assured, looking slightly protective.

Dumbledore looked genuinely delighted.

“Wonderful! Ah... Miss Granger... I don’t suppose you could help Harry in choosing the necessary feminine materials she may need now, would you? I doubt Mr. Weasley would be the best person to ask.” He added lightly, causing Hermione to pale but nod while Ron desperately tried to hold back his laughter.

“Alright. In the meantime, Harry... You can borrow my Hogwarts uniform. The skirt may be a bit shorter for you since you’re slightly taller than I am but we can change that with a spell.” Hermione offered, causing her friend to give her a grateful smile.

“Thanks, Mione. I appreciate it.” She replied, taking a deep breath to steady herself.

“What will I need to learn, professor?” She asked, bracing herself for what was to come.

Dumbledore beamed at her, looking somewhat curious. “I’m not entirely sure myself, Harry. But when I informed Minerva of her role, she went off excitedly to her dorms muttering things like social etiquette, walking or sitting properly, learning to play an instrument, cooking, household management, and party hosting. It should prove to be interesting.” He commented, offering another jellybean to Harry, which she politely refused.

Sirius guffawed loudly, causing Harry to hit him painfully on the arm.

“My godson—goddaughter!” He corrected himself quickly when he saw Hermione’s look again. “My goddaughter learning to be a wife? Why should I allow all that?” He argued, looking slightly angry.

“Well, Sirius... Unless you want Harry to be the laughingstock of the Wizarding World and of normal society in general, she has to learn how to be a woman. She is one!” Hermione pointed out, causing Ron to make a face at her tone.

“Blimey, Harry... I feel so sorry for you.” Ron commented, causing the dark-haired girl to shoot him a dirty look.

“Thank you, Ron. Listen... I... I need some...time to think about all this. Alone... Uhm... Do you mind, Professor?” Harry asked, looking politely at Dumbledore.

“Of course, Harry. Take all the time you need, we are not rushing you into things. Think about it.” The elder man assured him once more, bowing before taking his leave and exiting the room as he began to hum his own bouncy version of the Hogwarts school song.

Harry looked at Ron and Hermione apologetically, rubbing her temples. “Guys...? I’m sorry... Do you mind...? I’d just... I’d like to be alone...” She explained, causing both Gryffindors to shoot each other a worried look but nod, walking out of the room.

Only her godfather dared to stay as he pulled Harry into a tight embrace, stroking her hair gently in a soothing gesture. Both were silent for a long pause before Sirius spoke up in a soft voice, sounding encouraging.

“Cheer up, Prongsie. Maybe... Maybe all this won’t be so bad. Maybe we should both look at it like a challenge... You know? I mean... Being a woman isn’t so horrible is it...? Your mother was one...And she was a great woman. How bad could it be...?” Sirius offered, shrugging.

Harry smiled weakly at the idea, understanding exactly what Sirius meant.

"I know Sirius... I'm just frustrated at the fact that I have to...I don't know...relearn everything about being who I am... It's just so confusing." She answered, sighing deeply.

Sirius gave her a grin, his eyes twinkling in marauder mischief. "Think about this, Harry. We will make you the best damn female out there... Everyone will either want you or want to be just like you." He told her encouragingly, tapping her affectionately on the cheek.

Harry smiled and leaned her head against her godfather's shoulder in silence. "Do I...Do I have to change my name, Sirius?" She asked, looking solemn.

Sirius looked thoughtful for a long minute, pondering her question. "Well... That would depend on you, Harry. Do you want to change your name?" He asked her in return, giving her a serious look.

Harry didn't respond, staring off into space. After a long moment of silence, she spoke up again, her voice soft and certain.

"I...I want you to name me, Siri. I still want to be addressed as Harry by my friends once in awhile...But...I think Dumbledore's right. I have to change my name for legality's sake... On paper at least." She decided, nodding in affirmation.

"Well said..." Her godfather responded, giving her a small smile. "Alright... Are you sure you want me to name you? Lily once slapped me for suggesting, when she was pregnant, that she name you 'Gay'. Gay James Potter." He quipped, causing Harry to swat his arm but giggle nonetheless.

"Hahaha. Alright, seriously...? Your mother and father decided on two names when she was pregnant... Harry James for a boy... and Jaimee for a girl. How about it, kiddo?" Sirius offered, giving her a hesitant smile.

Harry pondered the name for a bit, considering how it would sound.

“So...I’d be...Jaimee Potter?” She asked, scrunching up her eyebrows in thought.

“I was thinking more along the lines of Jillian Aimee Potter. Jaimee for short. That way, we have both the names Lillian and James in your new name.” Sirius explained, his eyes lighting up excitedly.

Harry couldn’t help giggling, nodding her agreement.

“I take it this whole parenting thing is beginning to excite you, Paddy. Where did the name Aimee come from though?” She asked, looking at him suspiciously.

“Ahh. My great grandmother Aimee Black. She was one of the most beautiful women in their time... Prime of the hunting season back then. I thought I’d name my beautiful goddaughter after her.” He told her, looking smug.

Harry smiled but nodded despite her apprehension, knowing full well that should she take on her new name, there would be no turning back.

Harry Potter would disappear and she would have to be Jillian Aimee Potter.

“Am I ready for this, Sirius?” She asked nervously, her voice a whisper but Sirius understood her perfectly, knowing what she meant.

“You’re born ready, Harry. I’ll be right here with you. Jaimee.” He promised her, giving the back of her hand a fatherly kiss.

“Alright. I will be Jaimee, Sirius. But...” She looked intently at her reflection at the mirror across the bed, her eyes trained firmly on the lightning shaped scar on her forehead that had failed to disappear despite everything that’s happened.

“I’m still Harry.”

A/N:I realize this chapter is a bit more serious than the others but I wanted to stress that Harry would be undergoing a difficult change in

her life by being turned into a girl. I stressed this out because most authors of girl!Harry stories fail to recognize this fact. Otherwise, I will add more action to it in the next chapter. I promise.

Throughout the story, Harry or Jaimee will still be readjusting to life as a girl now. So don't expect her to become feminine immediately. Changes will be gradual. Right now, she's simply still a boy's mind trapped in a girl's body. Lastly, I know I said I wouldn't change Harry's name... but I realized it would look weird in a marriage certificate. Harry will still answer to "Harry" with her old friends. Most of the people who will be calling her "Jaimee" are new suitors, teachers or new characters. Hope that cleared things up a bit.

Next chapter includes: Student reactions, Lucius Malfoy, the Horrors of Feminine Etiquette and of course, Draco Malfoy.

Keep a lookout for an AAA: OoTP Update!

## Chapter 6 –Feminine Trivialities

Good for nothing Severus Snape...I'd like to pull the hair in his nostrils. Lucius fumed silently to himself as he strode into his office at Malfoy Manor a couple of weeks after the incident. A discontented scowl was on his regal features as he sat down carefully behind his desk and began rifling through the papers on it, evidently searching for something.

Taking in a deep breath of fresh air, he welcomed the solitary silence of his private chambers— incessantly grateful for the air of secrecy, mystery and darkness it held.

The atmosphere was hushed and enigmatic.

The room was older than he was— it spoke of historical secrets and events way beyond his own time. In here, every regal Malfoy head had historically plotted the ultimate demise of many of their family enemies, effectively bringing down the lives of some of the greatest wizards in their time.

Lucius sneered.

He was just about to do the same.

That Sirius Black better have it out by today if not, I swear to God I'll have him sent back to Azkaban faster than you can say—

Poke.

Lucius blinked. Raising an eyebrow, he turned a bewildered expression towards his upper leg.

“Merlin's slimy, bleeding nostrils!”

A terrified house elf squeaked in equal alarm at the earsplitting swear and tumbled to the floor, blinking up hastily at him with round, fear blue eyes. “Begging your pardon, Master Lucius! Begging your pardon!” He yelped in a high-pitched squeak, bowing repeatedly in apology as he beheld Lucius' heavily breathing form.



His hand clasp his pounding chest, Lucius shot the elf his fiercest and most intimidating Malfoy glare, causing the defenseless creature to cower away in alarm.

“What are you doing in my office? Haven’t I made it specifically clear that no one is allowed in my office?!” He screeched furiously, rising to his feet and purposely striding over to the front door.

With a mocking sneer on his face, he swung the door open and pointed to the bright sign that hung right on the other side of the door in which bold white letters clearly read:

Beware. Evil Mastermind at Work. Wahahaha.

The elf his head frantically, his eyes tingeing in pink.

Hiding a twitch in his left eye, the elf nodded and turning to bow apologetically to Lucius, launched into another apology.

“I am ever so sorry, Master Lucius. Lady Mistress Narcissa is only wishing Pooky is giving you this. It is the Daily Prophet, sirs...” Pooky squeaked, his wide eyes growing even wider in fear and apprehension.

Lucius snatched it out of his hand, pausing for a minute before turning back to glare at the intruding elf. “Well? You may leave now, elf!” He growled fiercely, narrowing his eyes as the elf gave another startled jump and nodded, hurrying out of the room.

Rolling his eyes, he turned to the newspaper in his hand and inspected the cover, his left eye twitching in irritation.

“Magical cure for sexual impotence?! What the bloody hell, Cissa?!” Lucius raged angrily, swearing and nearly hurling the newspaper to the floor when a brief shimmer of black hair caught his eye, causing him to glance at the newspaper again.

There, right on the front cover of the Daily Prophet, lay a picture of the beautiful, seventeen year old who had once been Harry Potter smiling brightly— albeit nervously at him. His curiosity sparked, Lucius' eyes traveled to the headline underneath the picture, taking in the information with gleeful delight.

## Jaimee Potter: Confirmed Debutante

by Rita Skeeter

Well, there you have it. It has been confirmed that the prestigious hero of the Wizarding World, Harry James Potter, will remain male no longer and has finally chosen to accept the terms of his— or rather her situation as a permanent female. As such, it has been confirmed of her recent entry into the debutante list this coming hunting season as well as the registry of her new name by her chosen consenting guardian and godfather, Sirius Black.

From here on end, Harry Potter is but a mere memory. The stunningly beautiful girl you all now see in the picture has thus recently been named and registered under the Ministry of Magic as Jillian Aimee Potter, as chosen by Black for her certificates.

Given the recent turn of events, it has also been confirmed that Ms. Potter will now be joining the debutantes in their debut in the next couple of weeks as well as willing to accept potential suitors hereafter— which I'm sure will give plenty of young waiting wizards out there aspiring to claim the beautiful young war heroine for themselves as a wife.

Courtship for Jaimee is now currently being accepted through Black, who has been chosen as the official mediator for Harry throughout the entire season. Good luck to everyone out there and we wish young Jaimee the best in her new life.

Lucius set the newspaper on his desk with a gleeful smile, his silver eyes already riveting around his desk to eye the tall pile of papers in front of him. They all arrived by owls this morning, as the Wizarding Society usually arranged for the potential suitors of the current

season to receive a profile of all entering debutantes for the season. Profiles of the bachelors were sent out to all registered debutantes as well for all Wizarding guardians arranging necessary matches.

Each profile was made and prepared specially by the debutante's legal guardian and was submitted to the Ministry of Magic for confirmation of entry, during which the Ministry sent them all out in stacks to the different bachelors of the Wizarding community.

As Draco's official go-between, he had taken on the matter of handling his son's mate selection, rifling through the individual profiles one by one in search for the next Malfoy mistress to grace their luxurious estate and carry their prestigious family name.

I won't have much to rifle with now. Lucius thought smugly to himself, grabbing the stack of papers and beginning to shift through them, looking at the pictures and the names one by one.

Lisa

Turpin...Ravenclaw...Blonde...Hmm...Okay...Considerable...Gorgeous but not much achievement though... Lucius frowned thoughtfully as he read the first entry, shaking his head as he examined the profile photograph of preppy looking blonde. Sighing, he decidedly crumpled the profile into a paper ball and tossed it into the wastebasket beside his table, moving on to the next.

Pansy Parkinson...Hmm... Childhood friend of Draco's... She'll probably be a good back-up choice given her family background and blood... But seriously ugly physical features... What would her genes do to the future Malfoy children?! Lucius thought in disgust, shuddering but placing Pansy's profile on the desk just in case.

Nevertheless... Her father is a good friend of mine. I'll have to keep her as a last choice. Lucius thought reluctantly, cringing as he looked at the girl's face again. He skipped through a lot of the other profiles of the more plain debutantes, shaking his head.

Susan Bones... Hannah Abbot... Hufflepuffs...Eeech... Another dissatisfied crumpling of paper. Patil twins... Hmm... Luna Lovegood... Horribly insane...Ah! Lucius finally grinned and pulled

out the one profile he was looking for, surveying the details written with an excited gleam in his eye.

Jaimee Potter... Wonderfully beautiful girl... He thought, chuckling as he inspected the moving photograph of the black-haired girl in thought. He nodded approvingly and moved on to the details underneath, smirking.

Full Name: Jillian Aimee "Jaimee" Potter

Parents: James Potter and Lillian Evans

Additional Family Background: Heir of Godric Gryffindor, Magical Heir of Salazar Slytherin, Only living descendant of the Peverells

Consenting Guardian: Sirius Hayden Black

School: Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Educational Achievements: Academically Third in Batch Rank: Hogwarts, Quidditch Captain Years 5-7, Advance Defense Against the Dark Arts Full Completion Level A, Martial Arts Combatant Full Completion Level A, Transfiguration Full Completion Level A, Potions Completion Level C

Current Field of Specialization: Auror and Ministry Defense

Languages Spoken: English, Latin, Parseltongue, currently learning French

Instruments Played: None

Titles Received: Defeater of Lord Voldemort, Order of Merlin First Class, Youngest Member of the Order of the Phoenix, International and Inter-School Magical Combat Champion, International Dueling Champion (3 Years Running), Youngest TriWizard Tournament Champion, Merlin Youth Leadership Award

Animagus Registry: Phoenix

Current Status: Still Available

Lucius was practically salivating from the list of accomplishments written before him— already imagining the impact it would pose on the Malfoy family name. The bloody girl had achieved the highest competency level in nearly all her academic subjects, potions excluded at level C. There were 13 levels in all— levels 1-10, then from C working up to A. Apparently, Potter had spent a lot of time preparing herself for the war.

She doesn't play any instruments though... Shame... but then again, that's easily learned... Black's probably having her learn one right now. He considered thoughtfully, weighing his options.

Thinking silently, he reached over and looked over his own son's profile— which no doubt was probably being sent out to the guardians of the debutantes at that very moment. They're probably placing my son at the top of the pile. He thought haughtily, reading through his son's accomplishments.

Full Name: Draco Lucius Malfoy

Parents: Lucius Malfoy and Narcissa Black

Additional Family Background: The illustrious Malfoy family -- one of the oldest pureblooded families since the 14th century, Descendants from the family of Merlin, Partial Veela heritage

Consenting Guardian: Lucius Malfoy

School: Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Educational Achievements: Academically First in Batch Rank: Hogwarts, Current Head Boy, Quidditch Captain Year 6-7, Martial Arts Combatant Full Completion Level A, Transfiguration Full Completion Level A, Potions Full Completion Level A, Arithmancy Full Completion Level A, Ancient Runes Full Completion Level A, Defense

Against the Dark Arts Completion Level C, Charms Full Completion Level A

Current Field of Specialization: Diplomacy, Law, Strategy and Business Leadership

Languages Spoken: English, Latin, French, Italian, German, Spanish, currently learning Japanese

Instruments Played: Piano, Violin, Flute

Titles Received: Current Malfoy Family Heir, International Diplomacy and Leadership Award, International Debate Champion, Young Wizards Global Business Conference: Representative of England, Young Wizard Global Leaders Convention: Representative of England, England's Most Outstanding Student (3 Years Running), Witch Weekly's Most Desirable Bachelor (3 Years Running)

Animagus Registry: Wolf

Current Status: Still Available

Lucius smiled to himself, feeling very pleased. Although Draco hadn't been able to complete his Defense Against the Dark Arts course, Lucius had continually trained him every summer at home in the field of the Dark Arts. He was an incredible magical fighter. He had also managed to best Hermione Granger at the top spot sometime last year, much to his father's acclaim.

He had achieved full completion of nearly all his academic subjects by then, being chosen as Head Boy for the school and owing up to the Malfoy name. More importantly, he was also the current Malfoy heir and was in running to preside over the entire Malfoy family once he got married. Lucius was very proud of his son and he deserved nothing less than the best, especially given that Draco had an incredible and prestigious future to build ahead of him. He needed a perfect companion by his side.

And Jaimee Potter is just the witch to do it. Lucius decided with finality, shoving the remaining documents and profiles under his desk and placing Jaimee's profile on top of his son's, smirking in thought.

None of the other girls even come close to accomplishments and achievements as Jaimee does...Not to mention her impressive family background and educational achievements... Lucius thought, whistling to himself in awe.

Glancing from one profile to the other, Lucius' face broke out into a triumphant grin, nodding in affirmation. They make the perfect couple. Now to start the formal courtship...I will have Jaimee Potter as a Malfoy... No matter what it takes... I will have her blood! Lucius thought gleefully, nearly clapping his hands together.

"And once she and my son reproduce... I will have the most powerful grandchildren on the face of this planet! Haha! Hahahaha! Ha... Hahahaha! Ha!" He laughed maniacally to himself, feeling deliciously evil and malicious.

"Father did you know you laugh in an eerie rhythmic pattern?" Draco commented as he apparated onto his father's table with a short pop, causing the older blonde to jump back in alarm.

"Draco!" Lucius snapped, nearly keeling over his chair and sending papers streaming all over the room.

"Father!" Draco exclaimed back, grinning at his father from where he stood, managing to grab Jaimee's profile out from the number of documents that had flown from his father's hands.

"Didn't I tell you?! What have I said about—"

Draco rolled his eyes.

"Yeah, yeah... I know...No apparition on the table... I know the rule father but this was an emergency." He reasoned, jumping down from the table and plopping himself onto the seat across Lucius.

"About the hunting season, father. I have chosen my mate—"

"I shall have known of that, Draco. I have chosen your mate for you, my boy... and you're to immediately start formal courtship as soon as possible. I have already written out a letter to her guardian to be given immediately." Lucius interrupted breezily, much to Draco's rage.

"But father, I thought we agreed I'd have two months to find one for myself! I still have a week left!" Draco protested, his eyes flashing with indignation.

Lucius chuckled, shaking his head and rearranging the stacks of papers on his desk. With a smirk, he indicated to the paper still in his son's hand, nodding in affirmation.

"Precisely, Draco... I have chosen the young woman you have right there."

Draco blinked and opened up the sheet of parchment, his eyes widening in shock, amusement, until finally satisfaction.

"Jaimee Potter?"

"The very same. Alluringly Beautiful. Intelligent. Excellent lineage and accomplishments. The perfect Malfoy bride." Lucius drawled in response, leaning back in his seat and flashing his son the same debonair smile they shared.

Draco grinned and leaned back as well, his eyes speculative.

"Father... Jaimee...is still Harry Potter. She... still hates me father. How do you expect me to win her affection after seven years of hostility towards one another...? And the fact that it was my fault she turned into a girl in the first place??" He asked, his eyebrows fused together in doubt.

Lucius' smile slowly but elegantly transformed into very sly smirk.

"Because you're a Malfoy, Draco. And we Malfoys are most well known for one thing..."



Draco looked at him expectantly.

“We always get what we want.”

“Potter, will you please pay attention?!”

Harry jerked awake immediately at the sound of Professor McGonagall’s irate tone, her long-lashed green eyes blinking drearly up at her in surprise.

“Erhhh...Ehhh?”

Professor McGonagall stared down at her from her glasses, not looking pleased.

“A lady does not respond or ask questions in such inarticulate manners, Potter. Not sit up straight and don’t slouch!” She snapped, whacking her wand against Jaimee’s desk again, causing the dark-haired girl to wince and straighten up almost immediately.

Behind her, she heard her Godfather sniggering to himself from where he sat in the far corner of the room. Her eyes narrowing, she turned and shot him a poisonous glare, causing him to wince and give her an endearing grin.

I’m going to shove his head up his—

“Potter!”

Harry winced again and turned to give McGonagall a nervous smile, her green wide with agitation.

Narrowing her own eyes at him, the older woman didn’t look pleased as she gestured to the piles of books on Jaimee’s desk, each one stacked one on top of the other and covered with dust.

“Now... Here are your assigned readings for the day, Potter. You obviously need to practice more of your French phrases as well as reading your F-clef notes faster for your Piano lessons this week.”

McGonagall told her, pointing to each book correspondingly just as Jaimee's eyes cringed in defeat.

"Also, don't forget Jaimee. Be sure to come early tomorrow morning in your proper dancing dress and shoes. I'll be teaching you how to dance the waltz properly in high heels as well as some more manners about fine dining...and..." McGonagall's voice trailed off as she coughed and adjusted her glasses, her eyes staring pointedly down her nose at the young Gryffindor in front of her.

Following her gaze, Harry instantly cringed again and shut her legs together hastily with a loud snap. Embarrassed and slightly red, she looked up at her Head of House and offered a disarming smile, shrugging innocently.

"...Sitting properly..." McGonagall finished, shaking her head.

Walking over to her hopelessly former male student, she began positioning Jaimee's legs such that both her ankles crossed delicately, both legs folded diagonally from her seat.

Jaimee twisted uncomfortably and awkwardly in her position, looking helplessly at her godfather for help but Sirius just shrugged back at her, looking both confused and amused at the same time.

"Now...Potter... A lady... should not only know when and how to properly speak or keep silent... she should also know the proper stance for standing and sitting down, especially if you're to set an example for your future family." McGonagall explained slowly, sighing as Harry looked up at her in complete and utter confusion.

"Oh honestly, Potter... After nearly two weeks of daily lessons you should probably have realized at least that by now." The older woman finally blurted, shaking her head in exasperation.

Jaimee laughed nervously, scratching the back of her neck in embarrassment.

"With all due respect, Professor... I need to be a lady for more than two weeks to learn all this stuff perfectly as I'm used to being a

boy..." She pointed out, gingerly picking up one of the books on her table and eyeing the dust covered title pages.

"But really... Is it that necessary to learn all this? I mean... French... Piano... Dancing... Singing... Walking... Eating... Seriously... I used to eat fine before all this. Can't I just do things my own way?" She asked, her eyebrows looking confused.

Professor McGonagall looked scandalized and shook her head furiously, looking at Harry as though she had grown an extra head.

"Oh dear no, Harry. You cannot possibly do such a thing...You'll scare off your potential suitors if you act the way you normally do as a man. From now on.. You're a woman, Potter... and you have to start acting like one... Even if it means we stay in here for the remainder of the school year." She told him, her face looking grim and determined.

Harry's eyes dimmed slightly, looking completely forlorn. "B-but... Professor....All this stuff...This isn't me...I don't feel natural doing all these things." She tried to explain but Professor McGonagall didn't seem to want to hear anymore, shaking her head.

"Now, now... You've defeated Lord Voldemort, Potter...Survived countless killing curses... Passed your Auror completion exam... This couldn't possibly be any harder than the experiences you've already gone through." She told her pointedly, patting her on the head before dropping another heavy book onto her table.

Jaimee groaned and inspected the cover of the book, looking completely desolate.

"I'd prefer Voldemort...Ergh...And this is...?"

"Politics and Interpersonal Relations. I will begin training you on your public speaking tomorrow afternoon after your dance lesson. Oh, before I forget... Read up on this as well." McGonagall handed her another smaller booklet, looking particularly pleased with herself.

Jaimee almost didn't want to find out what that was.

“This booklet contains slightly more personal stuff women are to remember at all points in their lives. It contains everything... From applying make-up, menstrual cycles, pregnancy, shaving, and lingerie... Nearly just about everything aspect of feminine hygiene is in there. Everything girls should know about but never talk about in public or even amongst themselves.” McGonagall explained slowly, awaiting Jaimee’s response.

The Gryffindor merely stared at her, her eyes wide with horror.

“Like...Feminine underground secrets or something? I knew it! Are you all into...some kind of cult?! Is that why all women change every month?!” She asked, looking completely dismayed as she stared at the book in absolute fear.

Her Head of House snorted, looking highly amused. “Yes...Well... Something like that, Potter. You’ll understand once you experience your first few months. As a girl, you’re expected to take better care of your appearance... Everything you’ll need about that is in that book. There are some things I just can not teach you in the classroom.”

Jaimee sputtered indignantly, her face turning a deep shade of red.

“Stuff?! Such...as?!” She pressed further, her voice cracking slightly and earning an amused smirk from her mentor.

Professor McGonagall cleared her throat and promptly turned to erase what she had written on the blackboard in an effort to hide her smile.

“Well... I suppose that’s it for today, Potter. Remember...Just because you’re taking this class doesn’t mean you can neglect your studies this year... You’re in running to be third in batch rank when you graduate, Potter... Don’t let your grades drop because of a tiny flaw.” She reminded him tersely, her expression stern.

Jaimee snorted, shaking her head in dismay.

“The last thing I would call a sex change, professor, is a tiny flaw.” She pointed out angrily as she stood up and began gathering her books into her bag.

Hearing the tone of her voice, Sirius finally stood up from the back of the room and gave his goddaughter a pat of sympathy on her head, obviously holding back a small grin.

“Look at it this way, Harry... Now if you want to see and check out a girl, all you have to do is look at a mirror!” Sirius exclaimed, causing Jaimee to shoot him another poisonous glare.

He shrugged and grinned at her before turning back to his former head of house. “We both really appreciate you doing this, Professor. Merlin knows what could happen to Harry without all this prior guidance...She couldn’t ask me about any of this, that’s for sure.” He kidded, laughing loudly at his own joke.

McGonagall merely raised an eyebrow, obviously not amused.

“First of all Black...I will appreciate it if you refer to your goddaughter more often as Jaimee now...Especially in public as that is the name you yourself have given her. Secondly, I know for a fact how horrible a woman Jaimee would have become had I left her under your guidance...Which is why I agreed to do this.” She told him, causing the marauder to cringe sheepishly.

He was just about to respond with another witty comment when they both heard a rather inelegant crash behind them, causing them both to whirl around in alarm only to find a disgruntled Jaimee sprawled rather messily on the floor.

Harry looked up at them with a wince on her features, her long black hair disheveled and all her books scattered in a circle around her. Managing an embarrassed smile, she bit her lip and gestured to her chest.

“Sorry....I dropped a book and lost my balance when I bent down to pick it up. Stupid heavy boobs—”

“Potter!” McGonagall cleared her throat again, her eyes wide with scandal.

That did it.

Sirius broke down and collapsed onto the nearest chair in hysterical laughter, clutching onto his stomach in both pain and support.

McGonagall’s eyebrow gave an irritated twitch before she whirled around and left the room in indignation, leaving a very irate young brunette glaring silently at her maniacal Godfather.

Stupid Sirius... I should give him a transformation potion... See if he doesn’t fall over carrying these stupid breasts... Jaimee thought sourly to herself as she stalked angrily through the empty corridors later that day.

Rounding a corner, she cursed loudly—and rather inelegantly—to herself as she nearly tipped her heeled shoes off balance, wincing as the harsh leather seemed to bruise into her skin.

How do girls wear these darn things anyway?! Why do they wear them if they hurt this much?! Have they never heard of practicality?! She thought irritably, her eyes narrowing even further as she passed a group of male Hufflepuffs staring indiscreetly at her breasts.

“The hell are you looking at?! I know exactly what you bloody wankers are thinking! I do not carry all this extra luggage for you to stare at! Piss off!” She snapped loudly at them, her eyes flashing violently.

At that, they all scampered off in opposite directions away from her, causing Jaimee to smirk to herself in satisfaction.

Looking around the corridors once more, Jaimee bit her lip before turning to face the wall, hastily adjusting the bra strap that was digging painfully into the flesh on her back.

“Merlin these things are bloody tight! How do women breathe?!” She snapped to no one in particular, this time adjusting the front lace of

her bra as she continued to head towards the direction of Gryffindor tower.

Several Ravenclaw first year girls looked at her strangely, their faces looking slightly scandalized but Harry gave them a reassuring smile, gesturing to the front of her robes.

“Sorry... Just fixing my ruddy bra... I think I got the wrong size; it seems to be squeezing my breasts too hard. How do you wear them properly anyway?” She asked loudly, looking down under her blouse and digging under her robes again to adjust it once more before turning to look at the girls in query.

Several of the Ravenclaw girls looked scandalized and met each other’s eyes in alarm. Obviously in shock, they politely excused themselves and pointedly walked away from the black-haired Gryffindor, each of them turning a deep shade of pink in the face.

Jaimee stared after them in confusion, her hand still clasping the front of her bra from underneath her robes.

“Hey, seriously! Did I say something wrong?” She shouted after them as they all struggled to run away from her as quickly as possible, leaving the green-eyed girl staring after them in shock.

“Okay... Well... I guess it was the scar again.” Jaimee concluded, shrugging before ungracefully bending down to pick up her bag once more, gathering up all her books into her arms.

She was just about to straighten up when she heard a soft and very amused chuckle behind her, causing her eyes to narrow in recognition.

“I love the view, Potter.”

At that, Jaimee still refused to move as she felt an unexplainable urge to hurl the book she had in her hand at the person behind her.

“Malfoy.”

She heard Draco chuckle once more, his voice so heavily intoned with amusement that she could almost see the self-satisfied smirk on his face.

“You are aware...Potter...that you are wearing a short skirt, right? I never knew you to be the type of girl to wear flower patterned knickers.”

At that, Jaimee blushed instantly and whirled around, her pleated skirt swishing upwards along with her movement and giving the Slytherin another clear view of her long slim legs.

Draco bit his lip, his eyes traveling upwards in one smooth movement from her legs and over every single feminine curve before resting on her furious face just as his lips broke out into a roguish grin.

A very sensuous eyebrow lifted slowly, allowing Jaimee to see the interest etched onto the handsome blonde's features.

“How are you holding up, Potter?” He drawled calmly, smirking when he took in the slightly disheveled robes and uniform covering the flawlessly delectable figure of his future wife—er...

Draco coughed.

His rival.

“You know very well how I've been holding up, Malfoy. Thanks to you and your ineptitude at recognizing potions, my entire life had to undergo a 360 degree turn in a matter of weeks.” Jaimee snapped angrily, her fists clenching tightly around her books.

Draco looked mildly offended, his eyes narrowing haughtily at her.

“I beg your pardon, Potter. I happen to be head boy and the top student in our year...If I couldn't recognize that potion, what makes you think you could? Besides, don't you think you should thank me? After all... You are easier on the eyes now.” He taunted, smirking when Harry's eyes flashed dangerously.



“You think this is just one big joke, do you? You think this is funny?!” She hissed under her breath, her green eyes narrowed as she looked at him in barely restrained fury.

Draco bit back a smile, inwardly enjoying any excuse to stare at Jaimee’s beautiful face for as long as he possibly could. Even if it meant she had to stare at him with murder in her eyes.

While she did that, he entertained himself for a little while longer by letting his eyes roam downwards towards the deliciously feminine curves in front of him—each one almost begging for his itching hands to explore them.

Biting his bottom lip, Draco failed to notice the sudden glaze in his eyes as his sultry stare landed directly over the exposed creamy skin of Jaimee’s neck just above her unbuttoned collar.

I wonder what she’d do if I bit into her neck.

“Malfoy...You sure keep your wand in the weirdest places.”

Blinking, Draco looked up to see Jaimee’s own self-satisfied and knowing smirk, her eyes pointedly staring at a certain area just below his navel. Flushing slightly, Draco coughed and readjusted the notebooks he was carrying to cover himself.

“I’d love to show you where else I could keep my wand, Potter.” He responded smoothly in a very low tone of voice, his face easily transforming into a seductive smirk.

Jaimee’s smirk faltered at that as she took a step back, slightly shaken.

“Wha—What do you want, Malfoy?” She asked nervously, girlishly tucking several strands of black hair behind her ear.

Draco smiled at the unconsciously feminine action, unknowingly causing Jaimee’s stomach to flutter nervously.

"I've come to make a proposal, Potter." He answered smoothly, giving her a calm, self-righteous smile.

Jaimee's eyes widened in dread for a moment before it began slowly narrowing in suspicion.

"What kind of proposal...?" She asked, her tone cautious.

Draco looked around the corridor, his eyes narrowing dangerously as he noticed several other pureblooded seventh-years watching them carefully, each one with a feral, competitive glare in their expression directed towards him.

I saw her first, you insignificant peasants. He thought haughtily, unconsciously and possessively taking a step closer to the Gryffindor girl, who in turn backed away against the wall.

"Malfoy, are you alright? Your left eye is twitching." Harry pointed out, her eyes widening slightly in alarm as she took another step back away from the evidently irate Slytherin.

Draco ignored her, his eyes traveling from one watching pureblooded male to another, the blood in his veins pulsing as he felt the sharp tension of the hunt evident in the air.

He could almost smell the blazing levels of testosterone around him, each prestigious pureblooded wizard taunting him...daring him...to make a first move.

They were all watching.

Waiting...To snatch his prey from his grasp at the slightest mistake.

A cold and calculating sneer on his face, Draco kept his eyes narrowed as his hand ghosted very lightly over the wand in his robes, his muscles tense and ready for any sudden movement.

Out of the corner of his eye, his gaze lingered on each individual wizard in the room, seizing each of their stances up just as they were probably doing with him at that very moment.

He saw Nicholas Rickman, a seventh year Ravenclaw eyeing him very discreetly from where he was presumable leaning against the wall of a nearby classroom. His dark eyes were peering over the pages of the thick Potions book that covered his face to hide his intention.

Terry Boot, another Ravenclaw, was calmly staring at him with steady, unblinking eyes from where he sat in the nearby quad. He sat right in the middle of a group of hulking Ravenclaw seventh years, each one watching Draco with taunting smirks on their faces.

Malcolm Pellerin, a Slytherin in his year, was the one nearest to Draco as he sat in an empty bench just a couple of meters from where Jaimee stood, his fingers clearly wrapped elegantly around his wand and his blue eyes icily focused on Draco's own calm silver ones.

Draco smirked to himself, not at all intimidated by the number of competitors he was obviously up against. He knew what had to be done.

"Malfoy?! Hello?! Are you even listening to me or are you dreaming up more perverted illusions in that sick, twisted little head of yours?" Jaimee demanded angrily, waving her hand in front of his face in order to get his attention but the Slytherin barely heard her.

Draco didn't hear her. Ignoring Jaimee's incredulous stares of confusion directed at him, he uttered a single word.

"Par."

He had spoken the word calmly and firmly, loud enough to have been heard by every pureblooded male in the corridors around them. At hearing the single word, each one gave a single nod of acknowledgement and gave him a taunting smirk, finally turning back to their own conversations and activities.

Draco's muscles relaxed and he dropped the hand he had lingering over his wand, turning back to flash Jaimee a calm and gorgeous smile though his eyes were still glazed over in deep thought.

“I’m in love with Professor Snape.”

Draco didn’t hear her.

He had spoken the word of equality. The word that every pureblooded male suitor was to utter as a form of courtesy to other suitors intending for the same hunt a specific wizard had chosen to pursue. To do so would not only imply respect for other suitors but adherence of the formal rules established the Wizarding Hunting Season regarding courtship.

“Malfoy...I want you NOW.”

Failing to do so would not only invite confrontations but would signify that you were simply an uneducated bastard trying to make a cheap and vulgar pass at an eligible lady—a form of taboo highly frowned upon and admonished by polite Wizarding society. A sign of disrespect that you do not care to acknowledge other males who may be interested in the same female.

Jaimee blinked.

“I’m about to strip all my clothes off.”

More importantly, with that single word he had inwardly signaled to other pursuing males the start of his formal courtship or interest at least in Jaimee Potter. The fight was on...And this was something he would make sure he won.

Jaimee glared at him.

“Let’s shag like bunnies.”

Draco didn’t hear her.

Let the best man win, losers. He thought, serenely lifting an elegant eyebrow.

“Malfoy, what the bloody hell is your problem?! Have you officially lost it?!” Jaimee’s voice suddenly broke through the heavy blanket of male testosterone just before Draco finally felt the painful contact of her palm against his cheek.

His cool, elegant façade broken, Draco glared at the girl in question.

“What’s your problem, Potter?! You just broke my inner monologue with myself! Do you not know that you’re supposed to let me drown in my own thoughts of triumph, evil and total domination?!” He raged at her, rubbing his sore cheek.

Jaimee gave him a mocking smirk, rolling her eyes. “And here I was intent on stripping in front of you just so I’d have the pleasure of knowing you missed it.” She drawled, highly amused.

Draco smiled very charmingly at that and turned to face her, his expression turning delightfully pleasant.

“Don’t do that, Jaimee. People are watching us...You should have learned by now that any form of physical contact towards a potential suitor might be interpreted wrongly by outsiders as personal interest on your part.” He quipped, smirking at her indignation.

“P-personal interest?! I don’t even know what the bloody hell you’re talking about, Malfoy! Are there...rules to these things I just never knew about?!” She asked in panic, her voice breaking slightly as she struggled to maintain control.

Draco’s smile transformed into another smirk but this time it emanated seduction, not mockery.

“Oh I’m open to breaking the rules, Potter...But only if it makes things more... interesting.” He spoke softly, his voice emanating with such raw sensuality that it sent shivers down Jaimee’s spine.

Jaimee took another step back, her heart pounding painfully into her chest.

“Unfortunately for you, Draco... I set my own rules.” She answered calmly, her green eyes gleaming and her smile almost taunting...teasing him.

Slowly, Draco flashed her a heartbreaking smile.

He definitely liked the sound of that.

Jaimee felt her knees buckle weakly under her, her breathing suddenly labored and shallow as she took another step back away from the Slytherin.

She had to get the hell away from him as fast as possible.

She had the maniacal and absolutely ridiculous urge to scream really loudly, squeal excitedly and jump up and down hugging herself while smiling.

If she didn't know any better, it was another curse that Malfoy was trying to lay on her and she had to get out of there before it was too late and she turned completely and utterly into a raving, girlishly squealing lunatic with boobs.

“Oh I'm counting on it, Potter...” Draco told her in response, his smile still in place as he reached into his robes and pulled out a clean white envelope tied elegantly with a single black ribbon at the center.

“You're counting on my becoming a raving, girlishly squealing lunatic?!” She asked him in surprise, her eyes widening as she looked at him as though he was crazy.

The elegant smirk on Draco's handsome face faltered into an incredulous grimace as he stared blankly at her with his eyes bulging out, a sweat drop forming on the back of his head.

“...Eh?”

Jaimee would have giggled at the rare opportunity of seeing the Draco Malfoy failing to portray his mastery of articulation if not for the

fact that she realized she had spoken her thoughts out loud and needed to get away from him to save her face as quickly as possible.

“Er...Uhm...You suck. Shove off, Malfoy.”

Brilliant, Potter. How creative.

Wincing, she grimaced to herself and hurriedly headed towards Gryffindor towers, keeping her eyes firmly trained on the floor as she felt her cheeks begin to flame in embarrassment. She was just about to jump up and down squealing excitedly like a bloody pathetic girl when—

“Potter! Wait!”

She growled under her breath and whipped around, her expression sour.

“What, Malfoy?!”

She stopped as Draco ran to catch up with her, his trademark smirk back in place as he finally handed her the letter in his hand.

Jaimee blinked at him and inspected it closely, taking note of the beautifully designed Malfoy family crest on the center and the expensive looking ribbon used to tie the letter in place.

“Uhm. Malfoy, what’s this?” She asked dumbly, her expression passive as they looked back up at him in query.

Draco smirked arrogantly and gestured to the family crest, looking highly amused.

“It’s my proposal, Potter. My father wishes me to present that to you and your intermediary personally. He believes it more sophisticated than simply using an owl to deliver it.” He explained, smirking wider as he was met with more confusion.

“Proposal for what...?” She asked stupidly although somewhere, in the back of her mind, she was already dreading the answer.

“To be my new, gorgeous Mrs. Draco Malfoy.”

Jaimee felt the room sway slightly around her.

Draco watched her silently for a moment, holding back a round of laughter as he watched the stream of various emotions move through the beautiful features of her face.

After a long pause, she began laughing hysterically, giving him an incredulous look of amusement.

“Hahaha...Alright, joke’s over Malfoy. Very funny...You almost had me going there. What’s this letter really about? Is it a howler? Will it explode when I open it?” She asked, a nervous and slightly shaky smile on her face as she began running trembling fingers through tresses of soft black hair.

Draco met her eyes calmly, ignoring the amused smirks he was getting from his fellow hunters around them.

“It contains my profile and my sincerest intentions for courtship. It also requests for a specific date in which my father could meet your godfather to discuss and formalize the actual procedure and the days I will be given your time and consideration. Please read it and consider me as your potential husband.” He explained to her, his voice soft so as to avoid being heard by the other wizards listening to their conversation.

Jaimee gaped at him in genuine surprise, her bright green eyes wide. “You know Malfoy...That was the first time I’ve heard you speak so many words in one sentence without a single trace of mockery in them.” She commented, looking amused.

At that, Draco’s look turned devious and he sneered at her, his silver eyes glinting. “Yes...Well, I’m very much interested in making you lose all sense of coherent speech altogether, Potter...If you know what I mean.” He said calmly, chuckling to himself.



The Gryffindor jumped back from him as though she was on fire, her eyes wide with panic and her expression frantic. Waving the envelope she now had in her hand at him like a wand, she gave him a hysterical look of horror.

“Quit saying stuff like that, Malfoy! It’s freaking me out! I mean it!” She cried out nonsensically, breathing heavily and moving away from him.

Draco watched her, his shoulders lightly shaking with genuine mirth.

“You still think this is all a joke, don’t you Potter?”

Jaimee’s bag had long left her shoulder by now and was now lying on a sprawled heap on the floor along with the books she had been carrying and jacket that had been hanging from her arm.

“I-I’m...Harry Potter...Y-You’re...Draco Malfoy...I...We...I...”

She sputtered incoherently, backing away from him until her back was resting firmly against the cold stone wall.

Draco met her eyes calmly, his smirk settling itself back into place.

“You’re my hunt.”

“I feel like I’m in first year all over again.” Jaimee muttered darkly to herself as she walked into the Great Hall that afternoon with Ron and Hermione; desperately trying to ignore the hushed silence that had followed their entry and the numerous pairs of eyes that trailed her every movement.

“Just hold your head up, Ha—Jaimee. I’m sure it’ll all die down after some time.” Hermione reassured her, giving her a supportive smile as they made their way over to their usual seats on the Gryffindor table.

Around them, as they passed, girls were intently looking Jaimee up and down in blatant scrutiny—undoubtedly searching for any part of her that was worth any form of ridicule or gossip in order to bring her prime status down a notch. Although this didn’t seem to bother

Jaimee in the least, it irritated Hermione greatly as she gave each girl a glare, daring them to say anything horrible about her friend.

Honestly...How low could these girls become for a 'good catch'? The brunette thought to herself, tutting and shaking her head. Glancing at her boy-turned-girl best friend, Hermione understood what was it about Jaimee that attracted every male's attention in the room.

As her new uniforms would only be arriving tomorrow, Harry had borrowed Hermione's school uniform that morning as well as several more of Hermione's feminine accessories.

As expected, Hermione's red and gold pleated skirt on Jaimee's tall figure did nothing to hide her long legs or her slim waist. The blouse she had on was slightly adjusted to fit her slightly more ample bust but clung to her curves delicately, showing off her slender figure. She had tied most of her long hair back in a simple ponytail but several strands stubbornly fell forward and framed her face, drawing attention to her long lashes and bright green eyes.

If the bloody girl wasn't her best friend and was formerly a boy Hermione herself had previously—and secretly—dated, she would have been bloody jealous of Jaimee herself. Shaking her head, she glanced at Jaimee again who was now looking around the room in dismay.

She was undaunted however and looked somewhat more irritated than embarrassed, her eyes flashing at any male who dared to look at her body in places she was all so familiar with checking out as a guy.

From their table, Seamus Finnegan gave a very loud and high wolf-whistle in her direction, causing most of the other half-blooded or muggle-born guys around the room to chuckle and nod their agreement but otherwise turn back to their food. Neville Longbottom took one look at his friend and blushed to himself, hastily turning back to his meal and accidentally spilling juice all over himself.

Across the hall, Jaimee caught sight of Blaise Zabini smirking at her direction but his eyes only remained on her for a couple of seconds—

moving at once to focus on Hermione right beside him. Beside him, Pansy Parkinson was glaring at Jaimee with absolute disgust and fury, the expression making her even more pug-faced than usual.

Rolling her eyes, Jaimee turned to Hermione was about to ask her about this when she finally caught of the bane of her existence—Draco Lucius Malfoy—lounging casually with some of the other Slytherins, his silver eyes intent on her features and burning with a strange glint of silent anger as he took in the reactions of the other males in the room.

When he caught her eye, a single eyebrow lifted in acknowledgement, the angry expression in those silver orbs now directed almost accusingly at her.

Jaimee glared back, feeling indignant.

What's his problem?! He was the one who humiliated me in the halls today with his ridiculous proposal! I'm the one who's supposed to be angry! She thought to herself, scowling.

She was just about to ask Hermione why Blaise Zabini was still staring at her when Ron suddenly interrupted, his voice sounding a mixture of incredulity and amusement.

"Blimey, Harry! Look at all the stupid blokes headed your way!" He exclaimed, pointing to a horde of pureblooded seventh year boys headed her direction, each one with charming smiles plastered on their faces.

At that, Jaimee whipped around and stared, frozen on the spot.

One by one, the hormone-driven species she had once called her own descended upon her like a predator to its prey, shoving past Ron and encircling her like the bloody Basilisk she had fought in the Chamber of Secrets five years ago.

"Jaimee, princess... You look absolutely beautiful this afternoon...May I sit beside you for lunch?" A handsome guy Jaimee

recognized as a Ravenclaw named Terrence Hudgens asked as he got to her first, holding out his arm for her to take.

Jaimee cringed.

“Uh...Haha...I—”

“Jaimee, darling! Beautiful flowers for such a beautiful girl.” Jason Maxwell, a tall, athletic Hufflepuff suddenly exclaimed, shoving Terrence away and presenting her with a gigantic bouquet of assorted, expensive flowers.

Jaimee accepted them and managed a weak smile, her eyes darting around for a way out.

“Th-Thank you—”

“Miss Potter...Chocolates for you, love. I had them especially ordered from Switzerland. Only the best for a woman like you...” A deep voice suddenly spoke from behind her, causing her to whirl around into the face of the very handsome Slytherin Theodore Nott.

This time, Jaimee blushed but took a step back from him, biting her lip in anxiety as she accepted the elegantly wrapped package among the stacks she was attempting to balance in her arms.

At seeing that from the Slytherin table, Draco's eyes flashed dangerously and he stood up in a swift, abrupt movement, causing Blaise to accidentally spill some hot soup down the front of his robes.

“Draco!”

Draco ignored him, however, and stalked towards the large group of slobbering hyenas surrounding his woman, oblivious to the incredulous stares he was receiving from his housemates and the looks of amusement from his professors.

“Th-thank you, Theodore...Thank you, everyone but please...I'd really much rather eat lunch with my friends right now.” She tried to reason

out, taking another step backward away from the group of guys around her but to no avail.

“Then let us eat with you, Jaimee. I’ve made you lunch right here with me. I’m an excellent cook, by the way...Accredited gourmet if you’d check out my profile.” A sandy-haired boy Jaimee also knew from Gryffindor offered, giving her a more-than-friendly smile.

Jaimee managed another nervous laugh, feeling helpless and overwhelmed at the same time as she shot looks at Hermione and Ron in panic but the two were too busy watching the scene in utter amazement, their jaws hanging open.

“Listen, guys...I...I’d really much rather you take this up with my godfather as arranged. I’d like to get to know all of you better but you’d really make it so much easier for me if you’d have this formalized first. As it was announced.” She told them calmly, lugging the presents she had received as she tried to back away.

“Can I at least carry your bag and books for you, Jaimee?” Another boy quipped up, following at her heels and his eyes lingering on her chest.

“I’ll carry your stuff, Jaimee! I’m much stronger than he is.”

“Are you free on Saturday, Jaimee? I’d really like to check you out—I MEAN! Take you out.”

Jaimee’s head hurt, her ears ringing as she looked around her in absolute confusion—feeling completely lost in the horrible tangle of pureblooded male limbs. She had no idea how she was going to wrestle her way out of this mess of raging hormones.

Merlin, was she this bad when she was a male?!

She was just about to call for Ron and Hermione again when she finally heard a cold, familiar voice speak up, causing her to look up in amazement and surprisingly, relief.

"I would greatly appreciate it if you kept your filthy hands off my woman."

That wasn't what she wanted to hear.

Jaimee felt her face heat up in anger and embarrassment as Draco Malfoy shoved his way callously through the crowd of raging purebloods, his silver eyes flashing dangerously and his sleek robes billowing out gracefully behind him. Although his handsome face looked calm and controlled, Jaimee knew her rival well enough to notice that he was positively furious, his anger barely controlled within his movements.

Theodore Nott glared right back at him, the charming smile on his face easily transforming into a taunting sneer.

"Come now, Draco...Don't be a sore loser. The game hasn't even begun yet. We all have an equal opportunity here...You can't claim her as yours just like that." He reminded him calmly, twirling his wand between his fingers.

Draco's eyes narrowed at that, his own hand ghosting over his wand.

"If that's the case, then all of you would do well to have spoken the word of acknowledgment aloud to everyone else and had set up formal arrangements...As is tradition. So I wouldn't feel so bloody disrespected with all this disgusting back-dealing...And so I wouldn't feel the need to challenge everyone to a gentleman's duel." He drawled smoothly, his calm voice betraying his emotions.

At that, knowing full well the extent of Draco's dueling skills, Theodore and the other purebloods behind him seemed to concede and took a step back, nodding their agreement.

"Par."

Draco didn't respond, watching each of them closely as one by one, they began smiling and bowing to Jaimee before walking back to their respective tables, no doubt cursing Malfoy in their heads.

Around them, everyone watched as the handsome Malfoy heir slowly turned to look at Jaimee, who was now glaring at Draco in absolute fury, her delicate features contorted with rage.

“And you, Potter. Don’t you know anything better than to dangle yourself up above a crowd of festering men like that? Have you never heard of feminine rules of propriety?” He raged at her, his voice dropping to a soft tone to avoid being overheard.

“Well excuse me, Malfoy. But up until a couple of weeks ago, I shouldn’t have to practice any feminine rules of rubbish if it wasn’t for your stupidity!” Jaimee snapped back, her furious voice raising several levels.

Shaking with visible anger, she walked over to the Gryffindor table to drop the parcels in her hands before taking a deep breath and calmly walking over to Draco, who was now watching her in silence.

Then, without warning, she raised a single fist and punched the Slytherin as hard as she could in the eye, causing the boy to stumble and fall back onto the floor in both pain and surprise.

“Potter! How dare—”

“Let me make one thing perfectly clear.” She raged at him, watching as Draco clutched his eye and scrambled up to his feet, his handsome face now matching the look of anger she had on her own.

She turned to face the entire Great Hall, who by that time had fallen completely silent and was watching the entire exchange since the moment she had entered the hall.

“My life is not a spectacle for all of you to witness, like some bloody soap opera! I didn’t even have an obligation to register myself as a bloody debutante! I could have gone past this stupid hunting tradition all together.” She began, her green eyes bright with fury and her hands clenched up into tight angry fists.

“Allow me to clarify. I have never been a woman before...Nor have I most definitely ever been Malfoy’s—Especially since he’s the bloody

idiot who turned me into a bloody female in the first place. To those of you who think you can take advantage of this, think again. I'm still Harry Potter inside another body and if you men think you can sidle up next to me just because I'm a female now, you're dead wrong." She continued, meeting the eye of each and every pureblooded wizard in the room.

"Now...As most of you realize, as a man, I demanded nothing but respect. Now if any of you truly wish to win me over this season, I suggest you take that in mind. And appeal not to the bombshell I may appear to you as but to Harry, the person I still am." She explained, her voice never once wavering or shaking as she calmly gave Draco an admonishing glance.

Draco however, was stunned as he had watched her speak, admiring the natural elegance of her voice and the way she met the gazes of everyone in the room without so much as a blink of fear or hesitation.

I should have expected Harry to be this kind of woman. He thought admiringly, still blinking in absolute stupor no doubt like many of the other people in the room were.

"As I explained in the newspapers, my godfather will be the one accepting my proposals. Without his approval, please don't approach me otherwise." She finished, suddenly looking tired before walking over to Ron and Hermione, who were looked at her in both pride and admiration.

She smiled at them, gesturing over to the Gryffindor table.

"Let's have some breakfast guys, I'm starving."

Hermione smiled at that, giving her friend a very soft pat on her shoulders.

"That was wonderful, Harry." She told her, giving the other Gryffindor a hug of support. Jaimee smiled thankfully at her and returned the hug, looking exhausted.



Ron gave her an uncertain grin, his eyes darting from Jaimee to the stacks of beautifully wrapped presents she had deposited onto the table.

"Say uh...Harry... Since you'd rather be won over by respect and all that...Can I have your chocolates?" He asked, his grin faltering when Jaimee turned and shot him the fierce female glare designed to make any man cower in fear. Evidently, as Ron gave a high squeak and took a step back, it didn't seem to miss its mark.

They took their seats in silence, ignoring the stares that continued to follow them from everywhere around the room until everyone eventually—almost reluctantly—resumed their usual activity.

Draco had long walked back to his seat at this time and was still watching Jaimee carefully as she began to eat, studying her features and the long-fatigued expression on her otherwise beautiful face.

Blaise, in turn, watched Draco in surprise, examining the flurry of hidden emotions tormenting his best friend's normally smirking face.

"Drac, wake up. Potter's a girl now, her punch couldn't have done you in already right? Hunting season's just starting...You still owe me 50 galleons." He kidded weakly, his smirk faltering when the blonde barely heard him.

Draco blinked slowly and turned to him, his hand still clutching his punched eye and the expression on his face a surprisingly boyish mixture of utter confusion, daze and incredulity.

"Zabini?"

"Yes, Draco?"

"I think I may have fallen in love with Jaimee Potter."

Blaise blinked. And blinked again. Then he smiled.

Still smiling, he raised his goblet of juice, attempted to take a swig, missed his mouth, and succeeded in pouring pumpkin juice all over his pants.

“Oh.”

With that—still smiling—his eyes rolled over and he fell backwards from his seat in a dead faint.

A/N: I love Blaise. He's so cute. Personally, I didn't like how this chapter turned out so much but I thought I figured you guys waited long enough. I'll try to post the next chapter as soon as possible though I don't know when that'll be.

Just to clarify though to everyone who's paranoid: I am most definitely BACK and will not be abandoning this fic OR my AAA series. That much is for certain. So please don't send in reviews asking if I'm abandoning you all again, I really am just a slow updater. :guilty smile: I'm a senior in college so I barely have enough time on my hands to write now. I promise to write whenever I do though. :grovels for forgiveness:

## Chapter 7 – Survival of the Fittest

“Everyone, please take your seats. We’ll be beginning class shortly.”

Professor Sleuvick announced sternly at them as the seventh years piled rather sleepily into the empty classroom after lunch that afternoon. Jaimee glanced at him briefly as she passed him, taking note of the fact that their new DADA professor—for that year at least— was rather good-looking for a middle-aged wizard. Although the man had glasses, he had an impressive physique of a fighter—which pretty much gives evidence to the combat skills he shows in class.

I just checked out my DADA teacher.

Jaimee goggled and shook her head hastily, her face turning beet red.

Stupid female hormones. She thought sulkily as she slinked to her seat in the middle of the room, slumping down beside Neville, who gave her a friendly smile of acknowledgment.

“Hey Harry—I mean! Jaimee...Uhm...Sorry.” Neville corrected himself hastily, blushing slightly in embarrassment.

Harry shook her head and gave him a reassuring smile. “It’s okay, call me Harry, Neville. Ron and Hermione still do...As well as a lot of my other friends. ‘Jaimee’ is only for appearance sake.” She told him, rolling her eyes.

Neville nodded in understanding before looking around the room. “Where are Ron and Hermione anyway?” He asked, giving her a curious look.

“Oh, they’re not taking the class...Remember? It’s an Elective class...They opted for Ancient Runes instead.” She told him, sighing as she glanced around the room, noting for a fact that aside from her and Neville, only Dean Thomas remained the other Gryffindor in the room. The rest of the class was dominated by Ravenclaws and Slytherins—Yes, Draco Malfoy was included.

Jaimee scowled to herself, glaring at the unaware blonde seated at the very front of the class.

What a teacher's pet...She thought irritably, her eyes narrowing at the back of his head almost in the hope of burning a hole right through it.

Across the room, Draco Malfoy promptly fused his eyebrows together in slight confusion and raised a hand to scratch the back of his head.

That's strange. The back of my head itches. Draco thought to himself, contemplating the thought for a moment before shrugging and beginning to pile his books out onto his table.

"Alright everyone, please turn to chapter five of your textbook. We'll be starting on a brief lecture about integrating martial combat within a magical duel." Prof. Slewvick finally announced as he whirled around to face the class.

Hmph. He scratched his head. Well...Good enough. Harry thought, still scowling as she began to bring out her book as well cursing under her breath when she clumsily knocked her notebooks onto the floor in the process.

"Crap! I mean—Goodness me! I dropped my book—Oh screw it—Neville, would you mind handing me my—"

"I got it!"

CRASH! SMACK! POW!

"No! I got it!"

SHMACK! WHACK!

"Jaimee! Your notebook!"

CRUNCH! SNAP!

She never got to finish her sentence however as she began to hear a series of large simultaneous crashes behind her, causing her to whirl around in shock to see about over a dozen boys dive for her fallen notebook under her desk, each one of them missing as they collided with one another and falling sloppily back onto the floor.

Jaimee watched the scene with an astonishingly stupefied look on her face, one eye slightly smaller than the other.

“Uhm...Are you guys...alright...?” She asked uncertainly, one eye crinkled rather strangely as she leaned down and easily picked up her fallen notebook from the floor—which, sadly, none of the guys had actually managed to reach.

Nodding and slightly disappointed, they shot Jaimee a reassuring smile before walking back to their seats, oblivious to the quill that was slowly dying a slow and painful disintegration wrapped by the bone-crushing tightness of Draco’s fist.

Those bastards. Draco thought darkly, his eyes narrowing in annoyance as he had watched them walk back to their seats after flashing Jaimee a well-practiced smile.

He hid his face away from Jaimee as she turned to look back at the front again, not wanting to give himself away so early in the game. She didn’t seem to say anything else as she began to write down the lesson Slewvick had begun to write on the board, ignoring the swarm of male attention she was getting from the rest of the pureblooded wizards around her.

“Good afternoon everyone. Please hasten yourselves in writing down what I’ve written down on the board, which coincidentally is your assignment for next week. After that, I want you to put your quills away and follow me to the dueling area at the back of the room.” Professor Slewvick stated, giving them all a brief smile before walking into the small doorway at the back of the classroom.

Draco hastily wrote down the assignment in his notebook and stood up to follow after him, stuffing his books back into his bag and bringing out his wand. Jaimee was already walking ahead of him, her

own wand held firmly in her hand as she anticipated the usual series of duels this class usually entailed.

Sure enough, as soon as everyone had gathered into the large dueling chamber where Slewvick was waiting, the older man gave them all a bright smile, gesturing to the newly matted floor.

“Hurry up! Hurry up, everyone. Today is going to be an exciting lesson for all of us...Oh please do clean your shoes before stepping onto the mat. Leave your bags by the door and bring with you only your wand. Thank you.” He pointed out to a number of students who had just entered the chambers.

Eyeing the mats in question, Draco raised his hand. “Professor, what are these mats laid out for?” He asked curiously.

Slewvick seemed to smile wider at that, his blue eyes twinkling in excitement. “I’m glad you asked that, Mr. Malfoy. See...Recall that this class, DADA107: Advance Dueling Tactics and Strategy, is designed mostly to handle every magical encounter imaginable. And this includes a physical fight, as well as magic.” He told them, observing the anticipating looks on their faces.

I wonder what he’s trying to say. Jaimee thought to herself, twirling her wand around absently in her fingers.

Professor Slewvick continued. “Being in this class, I believe your physical fighting skills and dueling abilities should have been well-developed at this point in time. So in that case, today’s lesson will revolve around exactly that.” He told them, much to the excited chatter of everyone in the room.”

“We will be having a graded magical tournament this afternoon...One in which you will not only battle your opponents magically but will be asked to deal with hand-to-hand combat simultaneously with magic, which I’m sure you will find an interesting combination.” He explained, giving them all a wink.

Draco and Harry both inadvertently smirked at that, their fingers already tightening excitedly around their wands.

"Now...The rules...The combatants are to use both magic and fighting skills. Notice that I have laid out large individual mats around the chambers." Slewvick continued, gesturing to the large number of mats around the room.

The students all nodded, eyeing one another in keen interest.

"The objective of each fight is to knock ones opponent off of the mat onto the wooden floor. One you do, the spell I have placed on the mats will activate and send up a cloud of smoke—allowing me to see the victor." Their nods of understanding urged him to continue.

"As I have said, this is a graded tournament, meaning—you will pair up initially and victors will fight against victors, losers will fight against losers. I will grade you not only according to your rank but also to your integration of magic and physical combat." He explained further, raising a hand to quiet down the excited chatter that was starting among the students.

"Now...May I remind you...This is a real tournament. Meaning, all of you...could get hurt. Some of you may bleed...get broken bones...scars...I am tolerating all this for the sake of the reality of it in an actual battle." He continued, oblivious to the ashen shade Neville Longbottom's face had taken.

"My only conditions...You are only allowed to injure the arms or the legs of your opponent. But to a certain extent of being healed. Now, all of you are aware of what I mean by this, as we have already discussed this in class. Any foul play or treachery of this rule in any way... might just merit you a one way ticket to Azkaban." Slewvick told them grimly, meeting their eyes with a darkly serious gaze.

He gestured to the large room, giving them a lopsided grin. "As all of you are probably aware, this tournament room has been emblazoned with protective spells all over by the school. So during your fights, you can and should be able to apparate fully around the room given that you actually know how." He eyed them carefully, taking in some sheepish smiles of some students.

"I myself have set up defensive spells around the perimeter when I removed the anti-apparition barrier from this room. You can only apparate around and within this room. Do not attempt to apparate outside this room for I honestly do not know what will happen to you." He told them, smirking. "I did this for the protection of other students around the school, of course... And to prevent anyone from escaping their fights." He added, winking at them as the class laughed.

"Does everyone understand...?"

Each of the students nodded silently, avoiding one another's faces.

"The winner of this tournament will not only get full marks for today's lesson but be exempted from a difficult portion of our final exam." Professor Slewvick finished, causing Draco's eyes to widen in interest.

"Madam Pomfrey will be waiting back in our lecture room should you wish to take care of any injuries in between your fights. Now, Miss Potter— as you had already won the interschool magical combat tournament last year, to be fair—you will be assisting me during this tournament instead." Slewvick told Jaimee, much to her immense disappointment.

Draco felt his eyes narrow at this, his pride insulted.

I'll show you I can beat you, Potter. He thought silently, positively sure of his fighting skill. He had been secretly training with his father all summer— even before Jaimee had started and though quite a few people were actually aware of it, Draco was a very powerful combatant duelist.

Almost as if she had heard him, Jaimee turned around and shot him a small, taunting smile—almost as though urging him to challenge her. Draco returned this with a seductive smirk of his own.

"Let's begin, everyone! I will announce the first round of fights...Please pay attention to who you will be fighting. We'll be starting immediately." Professor Slewvick announced excitedly, gesturing for Jaimee to stand next to him.



Draco nodded and waited patiently to be called. He watched silently as one by one, Slewvick began announcing the initial pairings of the first round, each one of them choosing a mat and facing each other to prepare for his signal.

“Neville Longbottom – Pansy Parkinson!”

“Nicholas Rickman – Theodore Nott!”

“Luna Lovegood – Padma Patil!”

“Malcolm Pellerin -- Lisa Turpin!”

Draco tuned out eventually as around him, matches seemed to snap into action and he found himself watching them instead— smirking when he caught sight of Longbottom ducking in terror as Pansy shot a fireball directly at his face.

Jaimee began rushing around the room and assisting the matches that have started, pausing only to scold the few purebloods who waved charmingly for her attention to show off as she passed them.

Avidly curious, Draco sniggered again as he saw Theodore Nott positively begin pounding Nicholas Rickman’s stomach just before the other boy managed a grunt and twisted his hold around, slamming Nott back down painfully onto the mat.

“Lastly, Draco Malfoy – Mandy Brocklehurst!”

He grimaced at that, sighing as he met the Mandy’s flirtatious smile and eventually followed the leggy blonde pureblood onto the nearest mat. She smiled at him again, flipping her perfect hair over her shoulder before readying her stance as she faced him.

This is humiliating...They could have at least given me a fighter who doesn’t shriek at the idea of breaking her nails. He thought irritably as he readied his own stance and raised his wand, shaking his head furiously as Mandy gave him a wink.

I can't believe I dated this girl. He thought to himself, smirking as she shot him a large gust of wind with her wand, which he immediately deflected with a simple shield spell.

"Give me a challenge, sweetheart." He told her, chuckling under his breath as he calmly sidestepped another hex she had sent his direction, causing the girl's face to scrunch up into a discontented scowl.

Draco smirked wider, shaking his head. He was so sure of winning over Mandy that he was determined to without having to send a single offensive spell or physical attack in her direction.

Instead, he circled around her while twirling his wand between his fingers as she continued to scream and shout a swarm of dangerous elemental curses at him. He could tell she was growing more and more frustrated as he either ducked or deflected or evaded each one perfectly.

"Malfoy! Take this fight more seriously!" She finally screamed in exasperation as she finally lunged in frustration at him, aiming her wand at his arm. At her spell, her pink-encased wand had instantly snapped into a sharp-edged spear which she thrust out at him, causing Draco's eyes to widen slightly in shock.

"Take this!" She shouted triumphantly, a sneer on her face as she aimed the spear right into his right arm.

**SHMACK!**

In an almost reflexive action, he shot the wand he was still twirling around in his fingers up in front of the spear and managed a quick spell that transfigured his wand into a wooden shield. Although effectively blocking the deathly sharp spear from stabbing him, Mandy's spear had pierced right through the wood and had stood a mere inch from sinking into his arm with the shield holding it firmly in place.

Mandy's eyes widened in surprise but the smirk was still on her lips as she narrowed her eyes at him. From the corner of Draco's eye, he

saw Harry walking over to their mat with a mixture of interest and nervousness. Her bright green eyes were wide as she waited for his next move.

“Nice try, Malfoy. But your stupid wooden shield isn’t good enough to block my spear.” Mandy laughed and made to yank her spear back from the shield but at that, Draco finally allowed a triumphant sneer onto his handsome face.

“It wasn’t suppose to.”

Mandy’s eyes widened.

Before she had any time to react any further, Draco had twisted the wooden shield around—effectively yanking her spear out of her grasp—and twisted her up over his back, sending her crashing down to the mat-less floor behind him.

The blonde girl was completely stupefied and stared up at the ceiling in disbelief, her eyes wide and her jaw hanging open in both anger and incredulity.

At that, Draco stood up and promptly transfigured his broken wooden shield back into his wand—gingerly placing it into his pocket. Looking down at the still dazed Ravenclaw, he shot her his gorgeous smile and brushed the dust from his robes.

“Forgive me, Brocklehurst...I really don’t have it in my nature to physically strike a woman.” He told her, flashing her a charming smile again which the blonde girl merely returned with a grimace and a nod. A cloud of smoke shot up from their mat, signaling the end of their duel and for Draco to progress further.

“Bravo, Malfoy. Proceed to round 2...”

Draco looked up slowly and met Jaimee’s raised eyebrow, which he turned with a sexy smirk.

“Wait for me, Potter...?”

Jaimee looked slightly confused at that but simply pointed him to his next challenger, who was now looking over at him with a glint of immense dislike on his regal features.

“Pellerin.”

## Round 2

Malcolm grunted painfully as he struggled to get up, wiping the blood that was dripping from his chin. Draco was smirking tauntingly at him, holding his stance and keeping his wand pointed firmly at the other boy.

“Is this over already, Pellerin?” He asked, yawning slightly before raising an eyebrow at his opponent.

Pellerin sneered back angrily at him before assuming his fighting stance again, shaking his head.

“You’re going to wish you hadn’t said that, Malfoy.” He spat back as he held his wand upwards— charging up a fireball in the air as he spoke.

Draco feigned a shiver, chuckling slightly. He thought he saw Jaimee peering over at their fight from ahead but decided not to pay attention to it, keeping his eyes firmly on the other Slytherin.

Malcolm’s fireball was slightly larger now as he took step toward Draco, his face leering. In a single flash, he whipped his wand and merged his fireball with his fist—sending it hurtling towards Draco’s face.

The blonde’s eyes widened in alarm and raised a single arm to defend himself from getting his handsome face burnt into crisp—managing to stop the fiery onslaught but otherwise exposed his hand to the painful flame

Draco winced in pain as he fought Malcolm’s continued onslaught to have his fiery fist reach Draco’s face by pushing his own hand against him, the fire in the other boy’s fist eating slowly searing into his hand.

Malcolm sneered wider and laughed, amused by the wincing expression on Draco's face. "You think you're so tough, don't you Malfoy? Well let me tell you this, I'm not losing to some spoiled little daddy's boy like you...Not now, not over Jaimee, not ever." He declared, smirking as he used his wand to make his fireball grow.

Draco hissed in pain again as this time, the fire managed to seep higher against him—burning and marring into his skin. From the side of his eye, he saw Jaimee rushing over to them, her eyes wide with concern.

Slewvick saw this and left Theodore continuing to pummel another Ravenclaw, rushing over to them in case things got out of hand.

Draco clenched his fist tighter and let out a cry of anger and purposely dropped to a single knee, still struggling to keep his face from being burned along with his hand. Using his other hand, he reached out painfully and almost desperately for his wand on the floor.

As soon as his fingers clenched around it, he smirked when the arm he had against Malcolm's fist instantly radiated a burst of cold water—extinguishing the other boy's flame and spilling out onto the mat underneath them.

Malcolm's eyes widened in panic as Draco soon laughed triumphantly and—using his partially burned arm—began socking Malcolm repeatedly in the stomach until the other boy had weakened onto the mat, gasping for breath.

Draco watched him for a moment, his eyes narrowed, before he finally sneered and set a final punch hurtling at him—timing the harsh impact of his punch with a loud enunciation of--

**"STUPEFY!"**

At that, Malcolm was sent reeling backwards violently from Draco's fist and collapsed weakly against the floor away from the mat, still skidding a few inches before he came just to a stop near Jaimee's feet.

Malfoy's an amazing fighter... She thought reluctantly, her eyes wide as she watched Draco breathing heavily from the victory.

Jaimee looked down at Malcolm for a moment, kneeling down to check his injuries while Slewvick walked over to Draco with a big approving smile, clapping his hands.

"Wonderful! Wonderful, Mr. Malfoy! Excellent integration of magic and fighting skill! Proceed to the next match!" He lauded, clapping as Draco promptly answered his praise with a reluctant smile—clutching his burnt arm.

"I will, Professor. As soon as I see Madam Pomfrey about this arm."

## Round 5

Theodore grimaced loudly in pain as he was thrown back against the mat, landing painfully to the floor. Beside him, he looked up and saw Jaimee watching their fight with a serious expression on her face.

"Your stance, Nott... It's easily knocked back. Bend your knees a little bit more." She suggested, giving him a nod. Theodore flashed her a thankful smile as he stood up and walked back over to where Terry Boot was standing.

The Ravenclaw gave him a look of dislike and lunged at him, tackling him to the ground and pointing his wand at his face to send a rush of cold water down at him. Theodore choked slightly but gave a grunt of annoyance, shoving the slightly smaller boy away from him.

"That was bloody cold, you jerk!" He cursed as he stood up and grabbed his wand, sending a rush of piercing sharp icicles at the other boy. Terry yelped in fear and evaded the icicles sharply, managing to evade all except the last—which made a rather sharp wound against his right shoulder.

Jaimee winced to herself but stood her ground, watching the fight progress.

“You asshole.” Terry cursed, crying out painfully as he yanked the icicle out of his shoulder and tossed it aside, clutching at the bleeding wound as he staggered slightly backwards, his feet edging closer to the side.

Taking the opportunity, Theodore smirked and lunged at him with a flying kick, aiming to knock the other boy off of the mat.

“Bad move, Nott.”

Terry grinned at that, however, and evaded him easily, causing Theodore’s eyes to widen as he came crashing down to the floor. He grunted out loud and held out his wand, shouting out a spell as fast as he could.

“Wingardium Leviosa!”

The Slytherin stopped instantly, his back hovering just a few inches above the cold floor as he lay down in midair, laughing in relief.

“Damn it!” Terry cursed out loud as Theodore easily guided his floating self back onto the mat, landing safely on his feet. Snapping out of frustration, Terry finally lunged at him again, this time using his bare hands.

The Slytherin anticipated this and instead, used his opponent’s momentum against him by ducking down and sticking his foot out—causing the other boy to trip ungracefully and come crashing down onto the bare floor with a loud smack.

“Gotcha.”

Theodore grinned. Widely.

Round 8

“Honestly, Longbottom! What are you— a first year?!” Draco taunted, laughing harshly as he evaded a simple disarming spell from the Gryffindor. Neville flushed in embarrassment and shook his head, resuming his fighting stance.

“Stop making fun of me, Malfoy.” He responded steadily, his voice turning heavy as he raised his wand up at Draco and spat out a spell loudly, causing Draco to step back slightly in surprise.

“Reducto!”

Draco had seen it coming at him, however, and threw himself down onto the mat to evade it, landing a mere inch away from being on the bare floor. Shaking his head in disbelief and a dazed expression on his face, he looked back up to see Neville smirking and making to dive down at him, his larger form threateningly hulking over Draco's.

“Whoa, Longbottom! Don't crush me!”

Draco shot his hands up just before the impact of Neville's bulky form over his own, using the leverage he had gained to toss the Gryffindor up over him and onto the large wooden floor.

Again, he heard Slewvick shouting out his approval as the Professor walked over to them, holding up a hand to help Neville up to his feet.

“Malfoy! Good work! Proceed!”

Draco smirked.

Round 9

Pansy hurled a large flaming ball at Padma, who shrieked and backed away slowly as the fire swirled dangerously near her hair. The Slytherin smirked and giggled as she watched the other girl pat the flames away from her brown hair in desperation.

As soon as the flames had gone out, Padma shrieked again, her eyes flashing dangerously at Pansy. “You almost burned my hair out, you bitch!” She screamed, dropping her wand altogether and running at the other girl, tackling her down onto the floor.



Pretty soon, both girls were screaming and cursing haphazardly on the floor, yanking and pulling at each other's hair—the fight completely forgotten.

"You broke my nail, you stupid Ravenclaw!"

"Soon it'll be your stupid pug-face, Parkinson!"

Pansy shrieked angrily and yanked Padma's hair away from her in fury, causing the other girl to scream and yank in retaliation—both girls rolling around the floor in a messy tangle of limbs.

"Alright, a cat fight!" A guy nearby whistled, causing some of the other guys to whistle and catcall in delight as they all began drawing near the girls' mat.

Jaimee rushed over to them with an exasperated expression on her face, looking completely irritated. "Alright, you two! Break it up! This isn't a female hair-pulling match, break it up!" She said authoritatively, yanking Pansy off Padma, who struggled defiantly against her.

"Let me go, Potter!" She screamed, struggling furiously but Jaimee gestured for Malcolm to come over, handing the girl over to her housemate before she leaned down and helped Padma to stand up.

As soon as the Ravenclaw was on her feet, Jaimee turned to glare at the other disappointed guys who had been watching, giving them all a feral glare. "All of you, show's over! Get back to your fights before I kick all your asses!" She threatened, causing all of them to move away.

Pansy rolled her eyes at her, shaking her head in amusement as she shrugged off Malcolm's hold on her.

"What?!" Jaimee snapped, narrowing her eyes.

Pansy flashed her a pretentious smile. "You have absolutely no sense of femininity, don't you?" She taunted, batting her eyelashes at her.

Jaimee snorted, looking more amused than angry. “Well duh, Parkinson. I’m a boy. You lost again by the way. You get to sit down now.” She pointed out, chuckling before she walked away, leaving Pansy fuming after her in obvious dislike.

## Round 10

“Alright! Final match, everyone! Gather round— this will decide this tournament’s winner!” Professor Slewvick announced as he beckoned them all over to where Draco and Theodore were facing each other, oblivious to the stares of their fellow classmates.

“I’m surprised at you, Draco...Trying to show off now, aren’t we?” Theodore taunted as he stepped gingerly onto the mat, pulling his wand out of his pocket with a flourish.

Draco merely smirked and pulled out his own wand, using his free hand to rake a few strands of stray blonde hair that was falling into his eyes. A few girls sighed silently at this as they watched him, female hormones dripping everywhere from watching the two handsome Slytherins compete.

Harry fidgeted uncomfortably from where she stood with Professor Slewvick, using a single finger to adjust the tightness of her collar.

“Why, Ms. Potter... You look a bit flushed, are you alright?” Slewvick asked her in concern as he peered over at her expression, causing the Gryffindor to blush even darker in embarrassment.

“N-no, Professor... I’m fine. Just geared up for a the final battle.” She reassured him, flashing him an innocent grin before turning away hastily and wiping the sweat drop that had formed on her forehead.

Stupid female hormones... I can’t bloody concentrate! She fidgeted uncomfortably again, thinking irrationally of how much she wanted to munch on a chocolate bar at the moment.

Merlin...and girls called us horny pricks. She thought, fidgeting again as she unbuttoned her collar, fanning her flushed face.

Oblivious to her squirming, Draco and Theodore kept their eyes trained steadily on one another—neither of the two boys blinking as they circled around one another in fierce, unbroken tension.

The class of students around them watched eagerly as both combatants seemed to size one another up—stance, magical aura and confidence. Draco's eyes narrowed very slowly, his hand ghosting over his wand and his muscles tense as he kept his gaze trained on any possible movements the other boy might make.

Theodore, on the other hand, simply flashed Draco a grin. "Be careful, Draco...Potter's watching you closely from behind." He pointed out slyly.

In that split second—just when Draco's eyes had inadvertently shifted to watch Harry, Theodore had lunged forward with a punch—his fist glowing from the energy of what appeared to look like an atomic blast.

Draco caught sight of Jaimee's eyes widening slightly in alarm before he quirked the corner of his lips into half-smirk, one eye winking at her in reassurance.

With that, he turned and flung himself up into air with a backward flip—evading the painful blast of Theodore's punch and holding himself up floating over the other boy as he pointed his wand leisurely down his feet.

Chuckling and crouching down slightly to one knee in mid-air, he shook his finger at the other Slytherin—who was now glaring up at him in disbelief, his eyes flashing dangerously with rage.

"Now Nott... You know better than to use my feelings for Ms. Potter against me in battle..." He drawled out loud, turning his head briefly and giving Harry a gorgeous smile.

Harry blushed slightly at that but simply narrowed her eyes, one eyebrow raising tauntingly in challenge.

“Keep saying stuff like that, Malfoy and I’ll go out there and beat you up myself.” She snarled, causing Draco to laugh lightly to himself in amusement.

He didn’t have time to dwell on his amusement, however, when Theodore lunged again—this time seizing Draco by his suspended feet and yanking him down angrily to the ground, causing the other boy to exclaim in surprise.

He recovered however and shielded what would have been a very painful landing on his head with his hands, holding himself up rather uncomfortably in an impressive headstand. This position was evidently an advantage as he soon used the added leverage of his erect feet to sock Theodore painfully up against the jaw similar to the effect of an uppercut, sending the other boy flying across the mat.

Jaimee’s eyes widened slightly, zooming in on the toned abs along Draco’s stomach that had been exposed when his shirt had lifted up briefly during the maneuver.

Crap! What’s the matter with you, Potter?! First Slewvick, now Malfoy! She shook her head and blinked rapidly, ignoring the gasps of awe and cheers from the class around her as she shifted her attention to Theodore instead.

The other boy was now picking himself up off the mat, wiping the blood that was dripping from his jaw. Draco flipped himself into an upright position with a single athletic move and turned around calmly to face him again, the smirk still on his face.

“Wonderful combat mastery, Mr. Malfoy! Ms. Potter, I think he may just be giving you a run for your money.” Professor Slewvick teased halfheartedly, causing Jaimee’s eyes to narrow in slight irritation.

“He wishes, Professor...I’ll take him on any day. Whether I’m a woman or not.” She muttered, causing her Professor to chuckle slightly in amusement before turning back to watch the match.

In a burst of anger, Theodore hurled an impressively gigantic ball of infused energy at the other Slytherin, the force gaining speed and

momentum as it neared its target. Draco twirled his wand around his fingers and managed to conjure a small stream of water, which he then used to shoot out against the mass coming towards him.

Theodore laughed out loud menacingly, looking highly amused. “Aw come on, Malfoy...Are you honestly that stupid?!” He taunted, his smirk growing wider as he saw the slightly disappointed faces of the other students watching.

But Draco didn’t answer. Instead, the thin stream of water he had shot out at the energy ball began hardening into an impressive rope of ice, which wrapped itself around Theodore’s large energy ball until it eventually hardened and merged with the rope that was ultimately connected to Draco’s wand.

Many students gasped loudly at this, as a loud round of applause echoed throughout the classroom. More than Slewvick, even Jaimee was impressed as she watched him—her eyes taking in the ice ball and chain Draco had effectively made with his magic.

Malfoy is good... She admitted reluctantly to herself, feeling her pride slightly threatened as she continued to watch the fight before her.

Draco had a devious glint in one silver eye as he chuckled his enjoyment and swung the rope of ice somewhat like a whip in the direction of Theodore’s feet, surprising the other boy when the ice suddenly became malleable and wrapped itself around his ankles, knocking him off balance and sending him crashing to the mat on his back.

The crowd of students cheered again, watching the fight eagerly as Draco easily began dragging Theodore along the mat towards him, sneering as he heard the other boy struggling to untangle the rope from his ankles.

He was thoroughly surprised when Theodore had managed free himself by then, grabbing the other end of the ice rope and yanking it roughly, causing Draco to curse and propel forward as he lost his balance.

He fell ungracefully to the floor, his limbs tangling messily with the rope of ice he still held. Theodore sneered in triumph at that, eyes twinkling viciously as he managed to grip his wand once more, pointing it at his blonde opponent.

“Mospherio!”

The last thing Jaimee saw was Draco’s eyes going wide before a cloud of black smoke erupted from Theodore’s wand and seemed to swoop in on the blonde Slytherin—circling around him and devouring him entirely.

Theodore chuckled slightly under his breath just as the students around them began whispering to one another again—many of the girls worried but eager to see what would happen next.

It was only after a good couple of seconds that Theodore allowed the cloud of smoke to clear slowly, fading off into the air and revealing...nothing.

Where Draco had been sprawled out into the floor was merely a puddle of clear blue water—the remains of the melted rope of ice Draco had conjured.

Theodore blinked in confusion, his eyes going wide with confusion and disbelief and he calmly walked over to the puddle, poking it tentatively with his wand.

The crowd was hushed at this point, watching with bated breath as Theodore continued to inspect the innocent puddle of water, his eyes growing more and more confused as he did.

When he was certain it was safe, he crouched down toward it and peered into the startlingly clean surface, finding himself face to face with his reflection. He looked at himself for a minute, wincing as he caught sight of the bruises on his face.

He was about to stand up when he caught a brief glimpse of silver in the water, immediately causing him to whirl around and point his wand at the reflection—eyes narrowed and suspicious.

His own angry expression stared back at him, meeting his gaze calmly.

“I suppose Malfoy ran for it.” He finally said out loud as he pocketed his wand and shrugged, shaking his head in feigned dismay.

He sighed dramatically, turning and giving Professor Slewvick a wide smile. “I take it I won, then?” He asked pointedly, smirking.

Slewvick didn’t answer but merely smirked back and pointed behind him, causing Theodore to stiffen instantly in realization.

It was too late, however, as he whirled around the same time a single hand came piercing through the clear puddle, grabbing a fistful of his robes and yanking him down towards the water.

“Holy Hell! Malfoy, you bastard!” He cursed in complete alarm, yelping loudly in fear as he struggled to shake himself free in fright.

He heard a chuckle right before Draco finally emerged from the puddle of water—his watery form rising from the ripples, assuming his shape before finally merging itself back into human flesh with his hand still gripping Theodore firmly by his robes.

As Draco stood up, he hoisted the other boy up easily into the air until both Slytherins were floating several feet above the ground with Theodore struggling wildly to free himself.

“Mr. Malfoy has an excellent mastery of levitation...” Slewvick commented to Jaimee, raising his eyebrows in obvious acclaim. Harry rolled her eyes, one eyebrow cocking haughtily in response.

“I suppose so...” She admitted reluctantly, glaring as both boys began spinning wildly in mid-air, throwing punches at each other and evading them at the same time.

By this time, Theodore had managed to free himself from Draco’s grasp and was holding himself up with his own levitation spell. Narrowing his eyes in obvious frustration, he floated backwards and

stepped onto the nearby side wall— walking along it for a moment and stopping to glare at the other boy.

Draco had imitated his position on the opposite wall on the other side of the room, watching him closely for any unprecedented action. Then, with a smirk, Theodore used the leverage of his feet against the wall to kick himself forward towards Draco, the wand in his hand transfiguring into the spear he aimed at his opponent.

A hidden sneer on his own face, Draco remained exactly as he was— frozen in place and eyes narrowed as he watched the other boy draw nearer and nearer.

“You’re mine, Malfoy!” Theodore cried out triumphantly as he lunged forward with his dagger, stabbing it towards Draco’s midsection. He blinked, however, his eyes blazing with fury and confusion as he found his dagger smashing into the empty wall as the blonde Slytherin literally disappeared from his line of thought—moving with an almost impossible speed.

Confused and his heart pounding, Theodore’s eyes searched around wildly for the blonde, his muscles tense and tingling as he was aware that the other boy had the advantage of attacking at any moment.

Draco didn’t disappoint him.

“Psst. Up here, Nott.”

Theodore’s eyes shot up immediately towards the ceiling. He didn’t have enough time to react and dodge at the same time however as he merely caught a glimpse of an inverted Draco standing on the ceiling before the blonde boy immediately lunged downwards at him with a sharp kick— catching him with a sickening crack on the jaw and sending him crashing down onto the floor, unconscious.

Harry immediately raised her wand towards Theodore’s crashing body to slow down its rapid descent to the floor, causing the unconscious boy to float carefully down until his body lay resting on the mat-less surface.



As soon as the defeated boy was on the ground, the entire class was on their feet and rushing towards a descending Draco—who was now smirking and pompously adjusting his slightly disheveled robes as met their praises.

“Draco, that was amazing! You were incredible!” Pansy gushed as she rushed forward and threw her arms around him, causing the blonde to grimace in dislike but otherwise nod in her direction.

Lisa Turpin rushed forward, pushing Pansy aside hastily and flashing Draco a gorgeous smile as she flipped her hair. “Malfoy, you’re amazing! Would you like a copy of my profile? You’ll see the list of all thirty of my academic accomplishments for the last seven years.” She told him briskly, eyeing him through the elegant silver frames that adorned her perfectly outlined blue eyes.

Draco smiled cordially but answered her proposition with a nod. “I was already sent out a copy of your profile earlier this week, Turpin. My father is making the necessary arrangements right now.” He informed her politely but his eyes were nowhere near her and were instead, searching hastily through the crowd around him.

“Bloody hell, Malfoy! That was brilliant!” Nicholas Rickman acknowledged as he walked up to Draco, slapping him on the back. Draco smirked at him but nodded once more and pushed past him again, his eyes still searching.

A couple more unfamiliar girls walked up to him at that time, talking and giggling excitedly but as he nodded blankly at their gushing, he finally spotted the one person he had intended to impress, who was merely talking to Professor Slewvick calmly, nodding and commenting about all the fights that had progressed.

Draco was unaware of the smile that had lit up his face as he watched Jaimee speak, her arms crossed in front of her and her eyes concentrated as she listened to whatever it was Slewvick was saying, taking down notes every now and then.

She was tapping her foot impatiently and a small green feather quill was tucked behind her left ear and surprisingly— regardless of how

unfeminine it may have seemed—Draco found her antics utterly adorable.

It would seem that she and Slewvick were discussing the necessary ranking and placement of the tournament that had occurred and whilst everyone else around Draco were talking excitedly amongst themselves about what had happened, Jaimee remained locked in what looked like a very passionate and knowledgeable debate about the duel.

It was in moments like these that Draco saw the old Harry shining out in the beautiful Jaimee most of all, and instead of turning him off at the idea of the girl being completely incompetent at being anything remotely feminine, he found that he liked every bit about her.

Now if only he could talk to her long enough to convince her of that.

Jaimee seemed to notice his eyes on her and she looked up at him, the green orbs narrowing in irritation at the smirk he sent her way. From how things looked, it didn't seem like she was going to be approaching Draco any time soon to congratulate him and at that, Draco felt irritated.

The only reason he had showed off so much during the tournament altogether was to catch her attention—that he was far from the runty little coward Harry had come to know ever since first year—and she didn't even acknowledge him at all.

Draco grit his teeth, cursing silently under his breath as a few more girls began heading his way to congratulate him—no doubt with the intention of establishing a means of pursuing further relations.

Since fifth year, Draco had always been a hidden fighter. He knew he had achieved a magical-combat competency level highly comparable to that of Harry Potter himself and more than anything, he was determined to show her precisely that he was her equal—if not superior—in magical combat.

Despite everything else, Draco knew he had an advantage over all the other suitors—he had been Harry James Potter's main rival for

the past seven years, and though that may not have meant much to everyone else, he knew Harry. Perhaps more than anyone else would have liked.

As a boy, Harry had enjoyed—had reveled in the throes of danger. He was thrilled at any opportunity for a good challenge, whether it came from other people or from circumstances itself.

Harry and Jaimee were one and the same person. Many people failed to understand that. And for that, Draco knew that the only way to win over Jaimee was to beat her exactly at the game she knew best.

Draco smirked wider as he reflected on his thoughts, watching Jaimee as she smiled at Slewvick and accepted the list of winners from him, nodding her agreement to announce them to the class.

He was no pushover. Winning the tournament meant nothing to him and the only reason he chose to reveal his magical talents now was precisely to woo Jaimee with his skills.

Perhaps it was time she realized that too.

Smiling at this realization, he walked over to where she was calling over the rest of their classmates and watched as she raised a hand indicating for silence before beginning to read the names.

“Alright... Professor Slewvick insisted I read out the names of the winners of the tournaments out loud. Take note, the first and second place winners are given full points for today’s challenge while only the first is exempted from the final exam. The rest of the placers will be given bonuses later on.” She explained.

At the class’ responsive murmurs, she continued—biting the top of her quill every now and then. Draco hid a smile at observing her old habit, shaking his head in amusement.

“Alright...I’ll read the winners from bottom rank up. The first is— oh crap!” She cursed out loud as she accidentally dropped her quill onto the ground, causing some of the debutantes—as well as some

pureblooded heirs—in the class to gape silently at the blatant curse that Jaimee had let out of her mouth, as it was taboo for female heirs to display such crude behavior in public.

Draco couldn't help it this time. He chuckled, clasping a hand over his mouth to keep himself from laughing louder.

Hearing his laughter, Jaimee misinterpreted this as mockery and turned to glare very icily at him, her beautiful face blushing dark red.

She cleared her throat, apologized and promptly began to read the names, causing Draco to tune out in boredom as Terry Boot, Lisa Turpin, Neville Longbottom and Jerrick Thompson all stood up to acknowledge the applause. Professor Slewvick applauded as well, looking particularly pleased with the proceedings.

Jaimee paused dramatically before finally looking up and giving the class a smirk. "And of course, the first two placers are obvious... In second place, Theodore Nott." She announced, watching as the Slytherin stood up and nodded his appreciation to his cheering classmates.

"And obviously...First place...Draco Malfoy." She ended, her voice turning a bit sarcastic in the end but Draco ignored that and stood up, standing up amidst the hoots and cheers of his classmates and walking over to Jaimee, who looked at him as though he was insane.

He smiled sweetly at her before he turned to the crowd, raising his hand for attention before he began to speak.

"Everyone...Although I appreciate the sentiments...I refuse to be acknowledged as the best...just yet. For I fervently believe that there is but one more matter of ranking that has to be decided." He announced, causing everyone to mutter in confusion.

Jaimee looked at him in utter bewilderment while Professor Slewvick walked over to them in amused query. "Yes, Mr. Malfoy... What did you have in mind?" He asked, raising a hand to silence the nasty words that were threatening to spill out of Jaimee's mouth.

Draco grinned at him, as well as to the rest of the class watching. Then—his smile disappearing and his eyes narrowing darkly—he turned to Harry and flashed her a very sinister sneer.

“Jillian Aimee Potter...I challenge you...to a magical combat.”

A/N: Don't kill me! It's not a cliffhanger! The actual fight is in the next chapter! It's uploaded already. Aren't I nice? Haha. DON'T FORGET TO LEAVE ME A REVIEW TO THANK ME FOR UPLOADING THEM BOTH. :wink-wink:

## Chapter 8 – Strength, Magic and Seduction Skills

No one dared to speak a word at the words that had issued from Draco's mouth. Jaimee was completely and utterly dumbfounded, her jaw hanging open as she stared at Draco as though he was insane, a look which the blonde returned with a calm and confident sneer as he met her eyes.

Professor Slewvick had fallen silent at this time, blinking and adjusting his glasses shakily as he tried to comprehend what Draco had requested, thinking the matter through.

Jaimee didn't seem to appreciate his silence.

"Professor, he can't be serious! I've been granted the title of Order of Merlin: First Class, last year. Hell, I won the Inter-School Magical Combat Tournament! Doesn't that entitle me to decline a challenge from a fellow student?" She burst out, her eyes wide.

Draco's eyes narrowed dangerously at her belittling comment.

"Potter...I assure you...I am no mere student. I formally request you grant me the opportunity to show you and everyone else around here that I am, in fact, better than even you." He retorted, causing Jaimee's eyes to widen curiously in both surprise and disbelief.

"Malfoy...You ran from the Forbidden Forest in our first year. You got yourself scratched on the arm by a bloody Hippogriff." She mocked, smirking at him.

Draco flushed slightly in embarrassment as he heard a few chuckles from the crowd but he sneered again, his silver eyes flashing at her in challenge.

"Come on, Potter. Do you really believe you're so much a better fighter than everyone else around here...? Don't be cocky...You know you haven't got one anymore anyway." He taunted back, causing a few of the people in the crowd to 'Ooooooh...' and snigger in amusement.

This time, Jaimee looked furious and she actually would have lunged herself at him had Professor Slewvick—who was looking completely amused and interested at the prospect of seeing his two best students compete—not held her back.

“I must admit Miss Potter...The idea of you and Mr. Malfoy engaging in a one-on-one magical combat intrigues me. I, myself, upon observing his fighting style, have some questions on whether or not his magical capacity exceeds even yours.” He agreed, causing Draco to smirk triumphantly and Jaimee to whirl around and glare accusingly at their teacher in disbelief.

“What?! Professor, you can’t be serious!” She raged, her green eyes darkening in anger but Slewvick merely held up a hand to silence her and the loud excited chattering that had broken out in the class watching.

“I am serious, Miss Potter...After all...It would actually do you good to accept challenges every now and then...Don’t be so sure of yourself, Miss Potter. Vanquishing the Dark Lord does not make you unbeatable. It is always important for a fighter to maintain a sense of humility—of being aware and accepting the fact or possibility of other fighters which may or may not be better than he or she is. Once...Before the glamour of your victory blinded you...You used to uphold this very humility.” He reminded her, causing Jaimee to redden in shame.

Draco sneered at her again at hearing these words, causing her to feel even more embarrassed at her public admonishment.

“A truly excellent fighter is always aware of the possibility of being defeated and the presence of other powerful fighters around her. He or she is also unafraid to acknowledge the fighting skill or prowess of others without the need to compare them to his or hers.” Professor Slewvick was not only speaking to Jaimee now but to the rest of the class, who was listening attentively.

He turned to Jaimee, who by now was hanging her head in disgrace.

He's right...I have become so arrogant and sure of myself these days. She admitted reluctantly in her head, biting her lip as she awaited more of his words.

"Now...Miss Potter...As I actually do believe that this class could learn much from a clash between you and Mister Malfoy, I urge you to accept his challenge. More importantly, I actually believe you need this as well...And that the both of you could likewise teach each other a thing or two about what I just said." He decided, giving both students a lopsided smile.

The class cheered loudly and excitedly at that and immediately, a loud round of murmuring broke out amongst the students as they began discussing amongst themselves who would be the most likely victor in this unexpected battle.

Jaimee groaned inwardly to herself but finally nodded her agreement, turning a reluctant grimace to Draco, who looked like he had just won for himself a million galleons.

She gave him a disgruntled glare, raising an eyebrow in contempt.

"You look awfully happy for someone who just sentenced his own means of utter humiliation." She grumbled but even as the words had left her mouth, she felt unsure of the truth in them.

Whether she liked it or not—based on the impressive skill and performance Draco had shown her awhile ago, she was certain that Draco Malfoy was a highly competitive and expertly trained magical combatant. Otherwise, he wouldn't have shown that coordination in both the physical and magical aspect.

She had yet to find out, however, exactly how much of an expertly trained fighter he was and whether his skills would actually match up—or even surpass her own.

Evidently, she was going to find out now.

Sighing to herself, she nodded to Professor Slewvick and followed a smug Draco to the centermost mat in the room, calmly unbuttoning



her school robes as she did. Draco flashed her a charming smile as he himself began loosening his Slytherin tie from his school shirt—something he had not done for any of the battles he had previously engaged in.

Like Jaimee, it seemed he understood exactly how much this battle would prove to be so much more difficult than all the others.

Their classmates had fallen deathly silent once more—watching with eager eyes as both combatants readied themselves for magical combat. From the bated breath and anxious atmosphere of everyone in the entire room, it was clear that this well-anticipated battle between long-time rivals Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy would not be leaving their minds anytime soon.

“What’s wrong, Miss Potter...Are you scared...?” Draco whispered softly as he took out his wand, his voice so smooth and alluringly spoken that Jaimee felt herself shivering at the hinted tone of desire that she had heard in it.

“Terrified...I don’t want to hurt you, Malfoy.” She whispered back, one corner of her lips quirking into an enticing smile as she took out her own wand.

Professor Slewvick walked in between them, holding his hand up to prevent the combat from commencing.

“I’ll count to ten...As soon as I reach ten, either of you are free to initiate an attack immediately. The first fighter whose feet touches the wooden floor or loses consciousness altogether loses. Fighters ready..?” He asked, glancing over at both of them to check their stances.

By this time, Draco had stripped off his own Slytherin robes and stood only wearing his school shirt and pants, the shirt unbuttoned slightly to reveal a single dragon pendant dangling from his neck. He was smirking as he held his wand firmly in his hand, twirling it around his fingers.

Likewise, Jaimee had removed her own Gryffindor robes and stood facing him in her own school blouse and red pleated skirt. Her black hair fell down her shoulders, the shorter strands falling slightly into her narrowed green eyes.

Glaring back at him, she nodded at Slewvick's query and readied her own wand, pointing it very delicately at her Slytherin opponent.

At that, Slewvick smiled to himself and began counting—each number causing both fighters' breaths to hitch up tensely into their throats in anticipation.

"1...2...3..."

Draco watched with an ardent gaze as Jaimee brushed several stray strands of hair away from her beautiful eyes.

"4...5...6..."

Jaimee's breath hitched into her throat as Draco's silver eyes darkened with concentration—setting themselves into a smoldering, steely gaze of gray.

"7...8...9..."

Both fighters eyed their opponent carefully, both of their pulses quickening and their temperatures rising as emerald green locked into steely silver—a sense of passion and danger reflected in both sets of intense orbs.

"10! COMMENCE!"

Neither Draco nor Jaimee moved.

Instead, both seemed to smirk tauntingly at one another, eyeing one another up and down while the class watched one with eager, silent whispers.

Jaimee stiffened slightly in anger as Draco's eyes seemed to linger longer on her long legs and chest more than anywhere else. Seeing her ire, he shot her a teasing grin, his silver eyes twinkling impishly.

In an almost unspoken agreement, they began to circle around one another very slowly—continuing to look one another up and down in apprehension. Jaimee narrowed her eyes further when Draco seemed to enjoy the fact that her school skirt was shorter than she would have liked and she shot him a glare at this.

“Like what you see, Malfoy...?” She hissed out loud, her fingers tightening around her wand at the Slytherin's audacity.

Draco smirked wider at that as he took a step back, assuming a perfect battle defense stance. “Oh no, Potter...I believe the phrase is better coined at— Liking what I don't see.” He mused, chuckling to himself.

At that, Jaimee seemed to snap and she lunged forward at him with an agile and powerful side kick. She was utterly surprised when Draco—as though he had anticipated the direction her attack would have come from—easily raised a fist to prevent her sharp heels from making painful contact with the side of his head.

Instead, he used her failed attack to grab her ankle, tightening his grip around it painfully and sending her back down crashing painfully to the mat. Jaimee recovered herself and landed not on her back but on her two palms to shield her fall. With that, she promptly raised both her feet up and socked Draco painfully upwards on his jaw—similar to the very move Draco himself had used on Theodore prior to their fight.

Draco seemed to notice her emulation of his move and scowled as he was pushed back a couple of feet. He rubbed his jaw, watching as Harry maneuvered herself into a back flip until she was back on her feet.

She smiled sweetly at the expression on his face, her green eyes flashing defiantly. Draco didn't answer and initiated an attack—

lunging forward and grabbing her arm, twisting it around her in an effort to seize her movements.

She struggled against him and managed to twist herself free, grabbing his arm and twisting it over herself in exactly the same way Draco had done such that she had reversed their positions.

Draco didn't find this amusing but when Jaimee began reaching for the wand he held tightly in his captured hand, he struggled immediately and twisted himself over her in his own back flip, reversing their position once more.

The Gryffindor laughed lightly at this, shaking her head in amusement and growing exhilaration. Using her free arm, she reached backwards over her shoulder and wrapped it around Draco's neck, effectively pulling the Slytherin down such that his lips were inches away from the exposed skin of her neck.

Draco responded quite positively at this and he murmured his appreciation, leaning forward and letting his lips linger very smoothly— almost feather-light – along the delectable area around her pulse point.

Jaimee's breath hitched and her entire body erupted into a series of delightful shivers. She squelched down another sharp exhale of breath as Draco's teeth nipped and grazed teasingly the sensitive area just below her ear, eliciting from her a soft muffled moan.

"Mmm...Potter, you're enjoying this, aren't you...?" He whispered into her ear, his warm breath tickling her ear sending more delightfully tingling sensations down her spine and over the rest of her trembling female body.

Cursing herself in her head, Jaimee finally recovered herself despite the incessant screaming of her boiling female hormones and suddenly remembered what she had originally planned to do.

Whilst the Slytherin was unaware, she grunted and used the single free arm she still had wrapped from behind around Draco's neck to

yank him forward over her form— bringing him crashing down to the mat in front of her.

His eyes wide with shock, Draco looked up at her smirk with a bewildered expression on his face. He recovered quickly, however, and a highly amused grin broke out into his handsome face as he swung one leg to trip her onto him, rolling them around until he was pinning her down to the mat.

Professor Slewvick coughed uncomfortably at the highly sexual atmosphere the fight seemed to be taking but the students behind him didn't seem to mind it as they began catcalling and cheering their appreciation.

Blind and deaf to any of the student reactions around them, Jaimee looked up at Draco's silver orbs with a mixture of rage, defiance and enjoyment sparkling all at the same time in her eyes.

She merely smirked, unmoving as Draco used their compromising position to pin her hands firmly down with his own onto the mat above her head. He shot her another impish smirk as he gazed down at her, his hand untangling the fingers she had wrapped around her wand.

Following this, he positioned her hands together such that he could hold them both down with his advantage in physical strength and used his now free arm to delicately place Jaimee's wand in between his teeth.

Draco raised a single eyebrow at the wide, bemused look Jaimee gave him at that. Using his free hand, he slipped his own wand carefully out of his pocket and began trailing it seductively and dangerously up her figure.

Jaimee held her breath, watching him carefully as he pointed his wand at the pulse point in her neck—stopping there for a long moment—before he began trailing it back down again down the front of her blouse.

Their male classmates around the room were having a field day now as they all watched the scene with wide smirks on their faces, obviously enjoying the proceedings of the fight so far.

His eyes twinkling with mischief, Draco promptly used his wand and unhooked the first two buttons of Jaimee's blouse, exposing a generous amount of creamy skin and a bit of her delectable cleavage.

"Mr. Malfoy..." Professor Slewvick warned rather uncomfortably, shifting uneasily as he watched but his voice was drowned out by another round of loud hoots and cheers from the male population of the students watching.

Jaimee's eyes narrowed very dangerously at that.

Up until this point, she had merely been observing exactly where Draco was intending for their battle to head towards. It seemed obvious, at this point, that he was merely playing with her.

Eyes glinting seductively, she leaned forward, letting her lips linger by mere centimeters from Draco's. At that, the Slytherin fumbled in unexpected shock, allowing her to wrench her wand away from his clenched teeth with her mouth.

Seeing that Draco was still in shock at what had just occurred, Jaimee wasted no time in apparating herself out from under him, reappearing over him with a loud pop. She pointed her wand at him, waiting for him to stand up and pointedly ignoring the disappointed boos from the male students around them.

"I am not your toy, Malfoy." She threatened darkly, her eyes flashing as the wand she held out in her hand shook with anger.

Draco understood her anger and stood up slowly, his wand held tightly in his hand. He was very much aware of the vulnerable position he was in and chose to remain perfectly still in anticipation of the next move Jaimee would make.

He was right of course as Jaimee attacked first, lunging at him with a powerful punch heightened by a flurry of wind trailing behind her fist,

propelling it forward. Draco barely had time to dodge it and apparated behind her, making to wrap both his arms around her neck.

Jaimee growled and countered this by grabbing one of his hands from her neck and twisting it painfully, causing him to relinquish his other hold. Her hand still grasping his, she aimed a fierce kick to his side but he spun around quickly to avoid it, freeing himself from her grasp.

This continuous series of reversals and evasion endured for a few more minutes, each one either managing a successful prediction of the other's intended move quick enough to reverse it or avoiding it altogether. The pair looked almost as if they were dancing to an unheard beat that only they seemed to know the rhythm to.

Eventually, the fight had come to a point at which both Jaimee and Draco were reluctantly chuckling as neither of them could get a punch or kick in—whether or not these were fueled by any magical spell.

“Not bad, Malfoy...You are better.” Jaimee mocked as she attempted to whip her elbow into his face. Draco, as she had expected, caught this easily and twisted it behind her back, causing her to wince slightly in pain.

In response, he yanked her body roughly against him until her back was pressing very intimately against his front and his other arm was wrapped firmly around her slim waist. She struggled against him and he bent down, letting his lips ghost over her ear.

“In more ways than one, Potter.” He whispered seductively, smirking as she shivered again, her face burning a brilliant shade of pink.

Her eyes narrowing, she yanked herself free with a burst of strength, effectively reversing their positions until she had Draco's arm twisted against his back in the same way he had twisted hers.

Surprisingly, Draco laughed at that as he found himself both highly impressed—and aroused—at the same time. He used his free arm to try and grab her from behind but she caught that too, intertwining

their fingers together and holding it tightly to prevent any form of escape.

“If you had wanted to hold hands, Potter...All you had to do was say so...” He teased, chuckling once more as he heard several amusing comments from some of the Slytherin boys behind them.

Jaimee smiled flirtatiously, finally coming to terms with the fact that she was actually enjoying every minute of this little game of seduction Draco was evidently initiating in between their fight.

“Keep dreaming, Draco...” She murmured back, smirking.

From behind him, she swung her bare leg over his shoulder and used it as leverage to shove him and hold him down into a kneeling position onto the mat.

“Are you purposely seducing me, love....?” Draco queried appreciatively, his eyes roaming over the smooth, slim leg that was pressing against his cheek.

“You wish...” She retorted, earning another chuckle from the blonde.

With that, he ducked further and twisted himself around her legs, causing Jaimee to exclaim loudly in a surprised laugh as he managed to reverse their position once again in such a way that Jaimee was pinned underneath him on the floor, their faces inches apart and her leg still positioned up against his shoulder, sandwiched very controversially between their bodies.

Again, the male students catcalled at this and vaguely, Draco heard Nicholas Rickman egging and cheering him on. Draco shook his head, highly amused.

He bit his lip at the intimacy of how their bodies were once again pressed together his eyes moving to meet her own, an intense expression on his face that made Jaimee squirm uncomfortably beneath him.



He used his free hand and grabbed his wand, again pressing it painfully against the pulse point on her neck before he spoke.

“We haven’t used magic yet, Potter...Don’t tell me you’re defeated already.” He taunted in a whisper, his eyes glistening in desire.

Jaimee answered him with a smile, blinking innocently at him.

“Not quite.”

She hoisted her other leg up onto his other shoulder and—in one quick and impressive display of both agility and flexibility—used the position to hurl him off her, causing the Slytherin to grunt as he landed on the floor on his back.

Breathing heavily, hoisted herself up off the floor with a flip and landed perfectly upright, turning around to give him a sweet smile. He was still staring at her from the floor, his smile playful.

She ignored the smoldering look in his eyes and instead, began tying her long hair in a neat ponytail in the back of her head, several strands still stubbornly falling to frame her face.

“Alright... You want to play rough...? Two can play at this game...” She drawled, smirking as she whipped out her wand again, twirling it around her fingers.

Before Draco could comment further, she had transfigured it into a pair of sharp, pointed daggers, which she tossed briefly into the air, caught one in each hand and pointed down at him in challenge—assuming a perfect fighter’s stance.

Draco grinned widely at this. This was getting better and better.

“Oh don’t worry, Potter...I am enjoying every minute of this.”

He shot himself up onto his feet and followed her call, whipping his wand out into his own set of gleaming silver daggers, positioning one in each hand and turning to face her, matching her stance.

None of them spoke as both instantly lunged out at the same time—daggers clanging and crashing noisily against each other, the harsh sounds mingled with their loud grunts and irregular breathing.

Jaimee dodged what would have been a sharp and very painful cut to the face as she slid herself between his legs, immediately snapping both daggers up in front of her in a defensive cross to prevent Draco's sharp stab towards her crouched position on the floor.

She struggled uncertainly for a moment as their daggers clanged together, pushing against one another with the force of its owner. Her eyes were wide as Draco managed to force her own daggers closer and closer against her face with his impressive physical strength.

With a cry of extreme effort, she managed to kick Draco off of her with her left leg, causing him to stumble backwards. Out of breath, she allowed herself to fall back onto the mat on her back.

Draco's eyes narrowed at her.

With a meticulous sneer, he merged his daggers together, twisting them around his hands until they merged magically into a long, single spear—which he then thrust downwards at her from where he stood.

Jaimee exclaimed in immediate alarm and rolled to her side, gaping as the spear stabbed into the portion of the mat she had been lying on and managed to pierce into the soft padding. She jumped up and ducked as Draco lunged again, this time aiming for her arm.

Instead of attempting to evade it this time, however, Jaimee reached out in an attempt to grasp it—dangerously succeeding as she managed to grip the spear's wooden shaft and keep it from stabbing into her flesh.

Draco smiled at this position and began running forward towards her with his spear still aiming to sink into her flesh, causing Jaimee's eyes to widen in alarm as she was forced—in effect—to run backwards to avoid being stabbed.

Thinking quickly, she jumped into the air—keeping herself afloat to avoid being driven completely off the mat. Having anticipated this, however, Draco had done the exact same thing and hurled the spear at her again, continuing to drive her further backwards away from him with both of them dangling in mid-air.

Jaimee gasped as her back pressed against the cold side wall, her eyes darting around for a means to avoid the next attack that was sure to come. Sure enough, Draco smirked at her and hurled the spear towards her, causing the Gryffindor to wrench her eyes shut as she anticipated the pain that would follow.

It never did though as instead, as she opened her eyes, she saw how Draco had managed to direct his spear perfectly to pin the hem of her skirt to the wall, keeping her firmly in place.

Narrowing his eyes, he slammed himself against her with impressive force—causing her to wince out slightly in pain just as he pinned her very tightly to the wall, both of their bodies still suspended several feet above the ground.

In that position of such close proximity, both fighters now grew very much aware of the intense heat and sweat that was emanating from the other's bodies. Jaimee closed her eyes, attempting to catch her breath as Draco promptly tried to do the same—both of them panting very heavily against one another, their bodies radiating with overpowering adrenaline.

Below them, student eyes widened as they took in the erotic picture Draco and Jaimee seemed to portray—caught somewhere in a captivating tangle of lust, violence and danger.

Draco's eyes grew slightly misty at his own realization of this but he shook his thoughts away and instead, wrapped his hand around her throat, causing the Gryffindor to struggle helplessly against him as his grip tightened, cutting into her oxygen.

Jaimee gasped, struggling wildly until her fingers clasped around the wand she held in her pocket, managing to croak out a single spell that blasted both the Slytherin and his spear off of her and sent him

crashing back down towards the center mat they had initially started in.

In a single, almost reflexive instinct, Draco easily caught his spear in his hand and—transfiguring it back into a wand—managed to slow down his descent and lower himself slowly and safely down the mat until he was back on his feet.

He looked back up and gave Jaimee a taunting wink, causing the girl to shake with anger as she lowered herself down towards him, her wand clutched tightly in her hand.

Draco remained silent for a moment, his wand growing back into a spear as he deliberated on his next action.

As she landed a couple of feet away from him, Jaimee froze as well, watching his still form with narrowed, suspicious eyes.

Draco didn't say anything but instead, held the middle portion his spear tightly in one hand and raised it above his head. She watched as he slowly began twirling the spear around his fingers somewhat like a baton—making it spin faster and faster, rapidly accelerating in speed.

Jaimee's eyes began to widen as she finally noticed the powerful gusts of wind that had begun to circle around him, driven by the force of the spin he was creating with his hands.

Bloody hell! Alright...So Malfoy IS more than just good... She finally admitted, wincing and taking a few steps back before she was devoured by the wind.

She gasped in pain as she was thrown back violently a couple of feet away from him, her eyes wide with uncertainty as she watched him spin the spear faster and faster until he was literally surrounded by powerful and protective tornado.

Jaimee stood up apprehensively, attempting to approach it but she cried out loudly as she was immediately thrown back once more, this

time not landing on the floor but suspended in mid-air, encased in a surrounding flurry of sharp, painful gusts.

She winced as one particular gust of wind cut directly into her cheek, another slicing through her the front clasp of her blouse, further exposing a generous portion of her black bra. She narrowed her eyes at that and turned to glare at the blonde Slytherin, who flashed her a gorgeous smile in return, his eyes not on her but on the patch of delectable skin he had intentionally unveiled.

She attempted to raise an arm up in defense but yelled out in pain again as it was instantly slashed by a sharp gust of wind, followed by another generous rip she heard this time from her skirt, effectively making the fabric scandalously shorter even as it already flew up every now and then to expose her legs.

Another subsequent rip to her blouse followed—this time causing a patch and exposing the skin of her stomach—along with an added slice of the garter holding up her hair, causing the strands to cascade back down her back.

“Keep your hair down, Potter...You look so much sexier that way.” Draco drawled loudly, his eyes twinkling with mischief as he let his eyes feast over the deliberately exposed portions of her slender figure.

Jaimee was fuming now but she continued to let Draco have his fun, observing him carefully within a safe distance from the effective cage of wind he seemed to enclose upon her. The Slytherin boy watched her with a highly amused expression on his face, lazily twirling the spear over his head.

He yawned to prove his point, using his other hand to check his watch.

“You’re enjoying this too much...Aren’t you, Malfoy...?” She asked calmly, her voice calm but her eyes watching him sharply—planning for a counterattack.

She could attempt to grab her wand but knowing the Slytherin, it had to be really fast otherwise it was highly probable that the minute she took it out, the wind would knock away from her—making it harder for her to fight back.

Instead, she focused on her attention on the spear Draco was continually twirling with his fingers, watching it twirl gracefully over and over again. As soon as Draco looked as though he was going to say something again, Jaimee immediately seized her wand, transfigured it into her own spear, and hurled it forcefully towards the spear Draco had in his hand.

She smirked triumphantly as she managed to knock his spear effectively out of his hand, causing it to fall down noisily to the floor and the violent wind he generated to instantly disappear. Her smirk disappeared, however, as she saw her own spear land on an adjacent mat beside theirs.

At that, Draco smirked and began shaking his head as he retrieved his spear.

“Well...What now, Potter? It seems like you’re defenseless now...” He taunted as he began walking towards her.

Before she could reply, Draco had lunged the spear unexpectedly at her—aiming it directly at her midsection. Jaimee had anticipated this sudden attack and evaded his lunge with a back flip.

Had Draco not lunged again, she would have gotten up but the Slytherin was adamant. He launched a series of continuous lunges and thrusts at her not only with his spear but with a variety of sharp weapons he transformed it into after every failed attempt—all of which he had forced Jaimee to avoid with continuous back flips and handsprings until she eventually reached the edge of the mat.

The students watching were practically salivating with anticipation now as they watched Jaimee with a mixture of worry and excitement—knowing that any wrong move on her part and she could easily end up losing the fight.

Draco saw the expression on her face and chuckled under his breath, lunging once more in an effort to make her jump off. He was genuinely surprised when she evaded him again as she managed to hoist herself up into a head stand and launched herself up into the air in a graceful arc, landing perfectly onto an adjacent mat a foot away from her spear.

Immediately, both Draco and the students looked to Professor Sleuvick in question at this but the man simply smiled and shrugged, the older man's eyes shining with exhilaration at the tremendous fight he was witnessing.

"Well...I did say the loser had to touch the mat-less wooden floor with her feet. Technically, Miss Potter is still on a mat." He reasoned, shrugging and laughing at the way Harry had creatively twisted her way around the rules.

Draco too, found this amusing and smiled at her, shaking his head in both disbelief and unspoken admiration.

Smiling at him, Jaimee bent down and grabbed her spear, transfiguring it back into her wand. Then, still smiling, she turned to gaze back at Draco and raised a finger—curling it beckoningly at him.

Tease... Draco thought to himself, smirking as he obliged and apparated in front of her. He was confused, however, when he saw that she had instead transported herself onto another fighting mat at the very end of the room where she stood smirking very meaningfully at him.

"Potter, what the hell...? Are you running from me?!"

Jaimee didn't answer as she took a step back and raised her wand and other hand, seemingly molding a huge invisible snowball for a brief moment before she flung it at him from across the group with great force.

Draco's eyes widened as he watched the now rapidly growing ball of fire gaining more and more size with distance as it approached him. With his eyes concentrated on the ball of fire hurling itself at him,

Draco failed to notice Jaimee apparating behind him again, allowing the Gryffindor to land a very painful kick onto his jaw and stomach.

He stumbled slightly in pain, whirling around to retaliate but found that she had apparated away from him again, now generating another fireball on another fighting mat at an opposite corner of the room.

Eyes narrowed, he apparated and followed after her but even before he managed to grab her, he had swiped at thin air and watched as she merely apparated onto another adjacent mat away from him.

"Alright, Potter... I'll chase you all you want." He agreed, smirking as instead of apparating— he launched himself over to her mat, causing the Gryffindor to grin in anticipation as he landed perfectly from his jump in front of her.

"Keep up with me then, Malfoy." She told him, chuckling before she broke out into a swift run, jumping from one mat to another around the room and only stopping every now and then to hurl fireballs at Draco behind her.

Draco kept up with her effortlessly and easily blocked any fireballs she sent his direction with his spear, sending them flying back towards her. Eventually, he caught up with her and lunged forward in an attempt to tackle her to the floor.

Jaimee instantly apparated to the end of the room before he caught her, stopping to catch up with her rapid breathing. Draco stopped as well and watched her from the mat from where he still stood, feeling exhaustion start to take its toll on his form.

Seeing the weariness in his features, Jaimee flashed him a self-satisfied smile. She snapped her wand upwards, transfiguring it into a long leather whip which at that precise moment, she immediately snapped at Draco and managed to tie it around his left foot.

"Damn it!" Draco cursed out loud in surprise and anger as he lost his balance and began stumbling backwards dangerously from the mattress towards the floor. In a spur of quick thinking, he used the spear he still held in his hand and stabbed it firmly onto the wooden



floor, locking it in place and effectively preventing himself from touching the ground by latching onto it, his form upside down with his legs dangling up uncomfortably into the air.

In an effort of growing frustration, Jaimee yanked her whip harder against his leg, causing Draco to wince in pain as the leather bit into his foot to struggle desperately in maintaining his balance.

Think...Think! Draco's eyes darted around, trying to think of a way to save himself from losing a leg as the Gryffindor pulled harder.

Then, it hit him.

He whispered a simple spell, chuckling as he heard Jaimee cursing when she observed his spear lengthening upwards allowing him to climb up farther away from the floor.

Scowling in irritation, Jaimee finally yanked on his foot hard enough to dislodge his spear from the ground. Luckily enough for Draco—by this time the spear had grown long enough that he simply landed onto the mat beside hers when it had been dislodged. As he landed on his feet, he caught his spear from the air and promptly transfigured it back into his wand with a smirk.

Before he could react, Jaimee had snapped the leather whip at him again, this time missing him by a couple of inches and igniting the spot it had hit on the mat in a blaze of powerful fire.

She snapped it towards him again and Draco's eyes widened in alarm as she managed to transfigure the leather whip into a very large and dangerous-looking python which, guided by Jaimee's directing hand and parseltongue instructions, was headed right at him.

At any other time, Draco would have found Jaimee's incessant hissing and threats in snake-language incredibly hot and completely irresistible. Now, however, as the snake continued to bite and hiss near his neck, he found himself wishing the damn girl wasn't a bloody mistress of serpents.

"Bloody hell!"

He barely had enough time to whip his wand out in front of him to conjure a large shield before the python snarled and lunged for his face, hissing in pain as its head collided with the shield's metal exterior— knocking itself out cold. At the python's failure, Jaimee sighed and withdrew the snake—returning its form to that of a whip.

“Any more tricks for me, Potter?” He asked, exhausted but otherwise shooting her a self-satisfied smirk.

Jaimee didn't answer but called his bluff, as she transfigured her whip back into her wand and held it gingerly up in the air. Her eyebrows scrunched in concentration, she began doodling in mid-air, humming contentedly to herself.

Almost immediately, a horde of different shaped fire and energy masses began surging at Draco from all different directions, causing the blonde boy's eyes to widen very widely in anxiety. A kiss-shaped mass of fire evaded his vision and managed to burn him near the leg, causing him to buckle slightly in pain but otherwise, keep his vision trained around him.

“Aw, Draco... Are my kisses that hot?” Jaimee asked out loud sweetly, watching the scene and laughing softly to herself at her own pun.

Draco narrowed his eyes at her.

He shot a beam of white light at each of the other shapes approaching—effectively transforming each one into a light, floating mass of ice.

Jaimee looked confused for a split second before she backed away slowly as Draco calmly jumped onto each one toward her, smirking as he hoisted himself off the last one and landed a couple of feet away from her.

As soon as he had landed, the floating steps of ice he had created crashed noisily down to the floor, shattering into tiny shards.

Jaimee raised an eyebrow at this, obviously impressed.

"I must say, Draco...You've lasted this long...I'm impressed." She admitted slowly, her voice dripping with dislike.

Draco smiled in return, conjuring a single rose from his wand and tossing it over to her. "Of course, love...I would never have allowed myself to be embarrassed in front of the woman I was courting." He drawled easily, causing her to glare back at him in irritation.

Jaimee had reflexively caught the rose in her hand and inspected it suspiciously, her eyes narrowed. "Malfoy, what the hell is—CRAP!"

She stopped midsentence and gasped as the rose began to grow and knot itself around her hand—lengthening very rapidly as it began tying itself around her arms, legs, and shoulders.

Draco watched this unravel calmly, blinking as the end of the rose eventually began crawling its way toward his outstretched hand. He smirked when his fingers wrapped around it, allowing him to yank the now defenseless Gryffindor towards him and to wrap his arms around her waist.

"Come now, Harry...You really are a girl now...You grabbed that rose midair almost instinctively without thinking... tshtsk..." He teased lightly as he held up a hand and caressed her soft cheek, his eyes twinkling as he met her own green ones, which were now looking up at him in intense disdain.

"Untie me now, Malfoy." Jaimee threatened, struggling as the rose's stem wrapped tighter around her limbs, causing her to wince in pain.

"Don't struggle love, you'll only cause it to wrap tighter around your delectable little form." Draco told her, tapping her lightly on the nose.

Jaimee shook her head, her eyes blazing with fury as she struggled more desperately, wincing again as the thorny vine wrapped even tighter around her legs and arms.

"Malfoy..." She warned again, her voice dropping a note lower as she looked at him with a very grim expression on her face.

Draco ignored her and instead, promptly lifted the immobile girl up into his arms, swinging her legs over his arms. Jaimee struggled wildly again, wincing as the vines dug deeper into her skin, marring into the white flesh.

The Slytherin, on the other hand, was whistling and was about to drop her very gently—almost mockingly—down onto the wooden mat-less floor. Before he did so, Jaimee—in one final act of desperation--launched herself at him and pressed her lips firmly against his, this time actually kissing him for all he was worth.

Draco stopped instantly, dropping his hold on the rose's end. His eyes clouded with desire before they shut right after and he leaned forward—the match completely forgotten—and returned Jaimee's bold kiss with his own passionate ministrations.

At this point, Jaimee reddened for three very different and separate reasons.

One— All of their classmates were watching and catcalling again and she could see Professor Slewvick's uncomfortable coughing once more as he witnessed her very unorthodox move.

Two – She was angry at herself for having resorted to such underhanded means of distracting her opponent in order for her to gain the upper hand.

Three – She was getting very turned on as luck would have it, Draco Malfoy happened to be a very skilled and talented kisser. She was still kissing him.

Oh GOD! I'm kissing Draco Malfoy!

Opening a single eye while keeping her lips intertwined with her opponent's—she never thought she'd say that in any fight—she managed to slip one small foot out of the ties that were loosening around her feet.

She stopped and carefully distracted the Slytherin by kissing him more deeply—pressing herself teasingly against him as she was personally aware that guys loved that—and successfully rendering Draco Malfoy, the Head Boy and top student of Hogwarts, incapable of any form of coherent thought or speech altogether.

With that, she pulled back and after smirking at seeing the completely befuddled expression on Draco's usually composed features, she spun her freed foot into a high and powerful spinning kick, finally knocking the Slytherin backwards off the mat and onto the cold, wooden floor.

Smirking at the expression on his face, Jaimee seriously doubted if Draco was aware of his loss or not as he continued to stare up at her with wide eyes, the expression on his face one of mixed disbelief, uncertainty and confusion.

The class—whom at that point had been utterly and deathly silent—suddenly sprang back to life and rushed over to surround the two exhausted fighters, both of which were unaware of their presence and were instead, staring uneasily at one another.

Professor Slewvick rushed forward towards them, clapping loudly with a large smile of utter amazement on his features.

“Wonderful, wonderful Miss Potter! Mister Malfoy! That was, without a doubt, the best fight I have ever seen for a quite a long time! Bravo! Bravo!” He cheered loudly, causing the rest of the students who had gathered around them to exclaim their agreement.

“You were incredible, Jaimee!”

“Jaimee, would you go out with me on Saturday?”

“Malfoy, I can't believe you lost over a bloody kiss!”

The last person who had spoken had been Theodore Nott and the black-haired Slytherin looked slightly disdainful as he watched their classmates help Draco back up onto his feet.

Surprisingly enough, Draco simply looked at him with a calm expression before his eyes traveled to gaze directly at Jaimee, who was completely flushed with exhaustion and surrounded by a group of giggling Gryffindors.

“It was worth it...”

Seeing the wide eyes Jaimee had immediately shot in his direction, Draco flashed her a genuinely sincere smile— his eyes sparkling with admiration as he took in her beautiful features.

Jaimee blushed very darkly at this, looking immediately away as Draco continued to let himself observe her as she talked to Slewvick.

Her clothes were torn, ripped and scorched all over. Several strands of her hair flew up in different directions— some parts of which were matted or tangled. Her face, arms and legs were scratched with shallow wounds and bruises and her clothes were set haphazardly over her figure.

But Draco thought she never looked better.

“The winner of the magical combat—Jaimee Potter!” Professor Slewvick had announced out loud, earning another loud round of cheers as he patted Jaimee approvingly on the back in acknowledgement.

Jaimee looked completely exhausted and was barely holding herself up as she nodded, almost oblivious to the loud comments and praise she was receiving from everyone around her. The room around her was spinning rapidly in her vision and she realized that the muscles in her legs were slowly beginning to give out on her.

“Potter.”

She blinked at Padma Patil’s ranting praises in confusion and turned back to look at Draco, who was now approaching her silently— his clothes torn and his arms covered with burns and bruises.

He knew for a fact that he himself must have looked horrible as she did but he approached her anyway, still smiling. As soon as he reached her, he proceeded to shock everyone else as he let himself drop to his knees, conjuring from his wand a single crystal rose—causing everyone around the classroom to murmur curiously.

Professor Slewvick's eyes widened in simultaneous amusement and surprise, stepping backwards as he allowed himself to watch the scene commence in front of him.

Draco didn't blink and instead, held the glass rose up higher to her in a humble offer, his eyes looking up at her in complete, exhausted admiration.

"Potter..."

Jaimee raised a single eyebrow at him, obviously not amused.

"What, Malfoy...?"

Draco managed a tired but otherwise happy smile, causing Jaimee to step back uncomfortably in suspicion.

"You've won more than today's tournament."

She looked confused at this, her voice weary as she spoke again.

"What?! What do you mean by that, Malfoy?"

He looked at her with a serious expression in his eyes, his gaze unblinking.

"Potter. I. Am. In. Love. With. You."

She yawned and nodded her response, blinking blearily up at him.

"That's....nice...Dray...Co—"

He heard a loud and heavy thud in front of him, and looked up just in time to see Jaimee finally collapse backwards in a dead faint from

shock and exhaustion. Slewvick had rushed forward and managed to catch the girl as she fell, watching in concern as Draco— after having spoken what he intended to say—collapsed in exhaustion as well, his eyes rolling backwards and his legs giving out.

As soon as the initial shock of what had just happened had died out, the students turned to look at their Professor, who was now looking back and forth between his two leading fighters with calm amusement etched clearly on his features.

Then, grinning, he turned to look at his students' blank, incredulous stares.

“Well...Class dismissed.”

A/N: Wahahaha. Well...What did you think? I know this chapter seems kind of a bit more serious than the other ones but the events will be important in the story later on. :wink: Anyway, just to clear things up— Draco is in love with Jaimee. He doesn't love her yet. There's a DIFFERENCE. And it is precisely after the events of this fight that things will begin to progress. For those of you who want more suitors, don't worry. They're coming...BELIEVE ME. Mwahaha. :Evil Laughter:

Well? TELL ME WHAT YOU ALL THINK! Your thoughts matter to me and whether or not they're major or minor comments, I'd love to hear them. :smile: SO DON'T FORGET TO LEAVE ME A REVIEW! :wink”

Next Chapter: Feminine occurrences + Clueless Godfather Utter Mayhem. Heehee. :wink:

See you soon! Mwah!



## Chapter 9 – The Trouble with Mens

Stupid Malfoy.

Jaimee was fuming silently as she glared at the beautiful crystal rose on the table in front of her, glistening innocently from where she stood in the middle of a horde of dressmakers circled and fussing around her.

She winced as a particularly elderly lady pulled the corset she was wearing tighter around her body, causing her to gasp for air, tear her eyes away from the evil rose and glare accusingly at the lady in question.

“Oi! Lady! Am I supposed to be able to breathe?” She snarled, her eyes flashing dangerously but the lady merely blinked at her, clearly not amused, before she gestured to more of her accomplices to continue pinning— what seemed to Harry—identical pieces of cloth around her body.

“Can you?” The elderly seamstress again, eyeing Jaimee through her thick, rounded spectacles. Jaimee glared at her and shook her head fiercely, looking highly irritated.

“Obviously not.” She responded flatly, immediately causing the woman to relax and shoot her fellow dressmakers a reassuring smile.

“Ah, well good. You weren’t supposed to. Linda! Over here, dear! The lace!” She gestured out loud to a blonde middle-aged witch rifling through some cloth materials. Harry’s eyes widened at that and she looked desperately at her Godfather, who was currently engaged in a very loud and curse-filled conversation with a floating head in the fireplace, clearly unaware of her predicament.

It had been approximately three days since Draco had approached her with his proposal intentions. She had pretty much avoided the blonde Slytherin since then, waiting until Sirius read his letter before allowing herself to act on anything he had said.

Frankly, everything that Malfoy said and did made her nervous and she didn't like it one bit. It didn't help that he kept shooting her annoyingly lovesick glances in the Great Hall every meal time—or that Hermione and some of the other girls would point it out when Harry wanted so much not to notice.

The entire student population of Hogwarts had heard about their magical combat by now and more than anything, they wanted to spark another one between the two rivals if only to use the opportunity to bet amongst themselves who would be the next victor.

Jaimee hadn't found the situation amusing at all and had nearly hexed Seamus Finnegan when the Irish boy had shoved her towards Malfoy in an attempt to start another fight. The Slytherin had merely smirked at this while Jaimee had blushed and in turn, shoved Seamus before stalking off.

Sirius had been more than amused when he had read Malfoy's letter and pretty soon, he was receiving more owls from different suitors all over the world—some of which Jaimee had never even heard of.

That particular morning, Dumbledore had given the seventh years the weekend off to meet with their prospective guardians to arrange some important matters regarding the upcoming debut. Harry was evidently no exception.

Now she stood on a large stool in the middle of Sirius' large office, glaring helplessly as her godfather paced the entire room with a long piece of parchment and a quick-quotes quill following after him to note his every word.

As soon as Jaimee had arrived in Black Manor through floo powder, a horde of dressmakers Sirius had hired had been waiting for her and swooped down on her like a pack of flesh-eating vultures.

I wonder if Ron has it this bad... He's probably at home playing Quidditch. Jaimee thought bitterly, sighing as she obliged to an elderly dressmaker's request to lift her arms, allowing them to measure her bust size.

“Paddy...?” She managed helplessly, looking at her godfather again—who was now talking rather impatiently to another wizard’s head that had appeared in the fireplace.

“No, my goddaughter will not be available for this weekend! Her schedule is already booked enough as it is! Now, I’m telling you that her only free time is next week—just before her debut. Take it or leave it, Amsius!” Sirius barked, glaring at the other man.

The other man seemed to concede and muttered a few unintelligible curses under his breath before disappearing with a loud pop, allowing Sirius to sigh and turn to face a desperate Jaimee.

“Yes, kiddo? You holding up, there...?” He asked her gently, allowing Jaimee to see the small worried frown marring his normally handsome features.

Jaimee managed a weak laugh, shaking her head and gesturing to the pink ribbon the dressmakers were now tying around her waist.

“I can’t breathe...But otherwise, I’ll be okay.” She said sarcastically, causing Sirius to give her an apologetic smile as he walked over to where she stood on the stool and planted a light kiss on her forehead.

“Look, I’m sorry I’ve been so busy the entire day, Harry. I feel like I barely got the chance to talk to you since you came in this morning...But all these owls and messages have just been pouring in like crazy and—”

Sirius stopped and ducked just in time as a particular large tawny owl swooped into the room above his head, dropping a large parcel onto his table. Harry sighed as Sirius walked over to it, his eyes flashing in irritation.

“—just about every single pureblooded family in the entire England is pestering me for an opportunity to meet you, Harry. I mean, take a look at these names.” Sirius looked extremely anxious as he opened the large letter attached to the parcel and began to read out loud.

“Mister Sirius Black,

We would like to formally request an official meeting between your goddaughter Jaimee with our son, Lucian, sometime this month. Please send us your response as soon as possible as well as a possible date for their meeting.

Yours truly,

Richard McConway,

CEO, Bertie Bott's"

Sirius finished with an exasperated and pointed look to Jaimee, who looked back at him with an exhausted look.

"These people are big names, Harry! Richard McConway—his family owns nearly all manufacturing Wizarding companies in England!" Sirius exclaimed in frustration, the former Gryffindor collapsing against his seat as he snatched another pile of letters on his desk and shook them in front of his face.

"And take a look at all these other names! The Faulklunds—they own about one half of London, the Kennicots—they're directly descended from Kingston Kennicot, the hero of the second Goblin-Human magical war!" Sirius continued, tossing one envelope into the air after another, his voice cracking with every word he spoke.

Jaimee winced, looking slightly intimidated.

"Paddy...?"

"The Skeffingtons, Jaimee! They want you to meet their only son, Preston. His father, William Skeffington, owns and manages Gringotts!" Sirius added, tossing another letter into the air as he continued rifling through the list.

"But Paddy... None of that matters to me... I don't need a lot of money. Not then as a guy, not now as a girl." Jaimee interjected, sighing as she felt young dressmaker behind her tug tighter on corset again, causing her to gasp out for air.

Sirius sobered at the dejected tone of her voice, finally allowing himself to calm down as he dropped his face into his hands in exhaustion.

“I know, Harry... I’m sorry... I didn’t mean for it to sound that way. It’s just that...Well... These people are all trying to negotiate with me for your hand in marriage... And I just... I just want to make sure I choose the best person for you.” He told her softly, before looking up and giving her a small smile.

Jaimee returned his smile at that, appreciating his sentiment.

“I know that, Sirius... And I know you’re only looking out for what’s best for me. But I want you to know that I— HOLY HELL! NO FUCKING WAY! I ABSOLUTELY DRAW THE LINE AT FRILLS AND RUFFLES! GET THAT BLOODY THING AWAY FROM ME—ARGH!” She suddenly screamed as one of the ladies held a frilled gown up at her, causing her to flinch backwards and fall ungracefully off of her stool.

Sirius burst into a round of hearty laughter as he watched his goddaughter pick herself grumpily off the floor—or at least attempt to as the tight corset around her bodice seemed to restrict her movement and only caused her to fall right back onto her arse.

“And this is the young woman I’m supposedly allowing all these prestigious pureblooded families to bid for...?” He teased, smirking as Jaimee stuck her tongue at him in annoyance.

“Who are you calling a woman?” She muttered as she allowed the dressmakers to help her back up onto the stool, all of them frowning at her inexcusable show of unfeminine behavior.

Just as a meek looking witch was just about to hand her the ruffled, frilly offending garment, Jaimee flinched away again—this time toppling backwards over completely and managing to rip right through the fabric she was wearing.

“Meez Pottere!! You must stop doing zees! We ‘ave a very tight shhedule, plenty of young meestresses are waiteeng for to ‘ave zer gowns made!” One of the dressmakers pointed out in exasperation, throwing up her hands in defeat.

Harry narrowed her eyes at her, looking at Sirius before speaking. “Fine! But Sirius, TELL HER that the only time Harry Potter will ever wear FRILLS is when Voldemort rises from the dead!” She shrieked, looking completely enraged.

Sirius blinked.

“Madame... My goddaughter declares that the only time she will wear frills is when—”

“Yes, Yes! I ‘eard her, Meester Black!” The woman snapped, sending him a sharp glare which the marauder returned with a sheepish grin and shrug.

Jaimee was breathing heavily and watching with wide, suspicious eyes as the woman finally set the ruffled cloth back down to the floor, allowing her to breathe a sigh of relief.

It was a good couple of agonizing minutes of the dressmakers fussing over what damn shade of green she was going to wear to the debut when Sirius spoke up again, looking up from the long list he was reading in his table.

“Oh before I forget, Harry... Have you arranged the matter of your escort to the debutante ball yet?” Sirius asked, wincing as Jaimee shot him a poisonous glare.

“My what?!”

Sirius winced at the angry hiss again but laughed nervously, running a shaking hand through his sleek, black hair.

“Ehehe... Well, what do you know...? Seems like I forgot to tell you... Uhm, Jaimee...You need a male escort to the debutante ball. There, now you know.” With that, he hastily buried his nose back into the

papers he was reading, ignoring the loud indignant curses Jaimee was spitting at him.

Sirius raised up his hands helplessly and gave a laugh, looking defeated. "Hey, I don't make the rules up here, kiddo... I'm just doing my job. Relax, though... It's just an escort anyway...I'm sure one of your friends would be more than willing to do it. How about Ron? Or that Irish guy?" He suggested, causing Harry to glare at him.

"I will not go with Ron. That is too weird. And I will not go with Seamus either—he'll spend the entire evening looking down my damn breasts." She said bluntly, causing Sirius to chuckle in spite of himself.

"Speaking of perverts, you'll have your first arranged meeting tomorrow morning with Draco Malfoy, by the way. He and his father were the very first to send their interest so I had no choice but to schedule them..." Sirius' voice trailed off when he saw the blazing fire in Jaimee's eyes, her form tensing in anger.

"What?"

Sirius asked as he blinked again, raising an eyebrow at the expression on his goddaughter's face. She was almost as pink as the ribbon the seamstresses were attaching to her gown.

"Sirius, I thought I made it clear that I do not have any interest whatsoever in marrying that smarmy, two-faced git!" She snapped, slapping a hand away and glaring at one of the seamstresses who had attempted to fix her cleavage.

Sirius looked highly amused but shook his head, looking adamant.

"The Malfoys have been, and are still, one of the oldest pureblooded Wizarding families in Europe. They are also one of the richest—second only to the Royal Family of Denmark and trust me, that is saying something. They also happen to be related to my family and I couldn't just say no to Lucius given that." He admitted, looking hesitant.

Jaimee blinked, looking genuinely surprised.

“Denmark has a royal family? They’re wizards?” She asked, a look of complete astonishment on her face.

Sirius laughed and shook his head, standing up from his desk and walking over to ruffle her hair affectionately.

“You’d be surprised, Jaimee. And besides... that slimy jerk is the reason you’re a girl in the first place. Maybe marrying him and spending all his money...or at least stringing him along the entire season is the best way to repay him.” Sirius suggested, sniggering.

Jaimee made a face, shaking her head fiercely. “I’m not like that, Sirius. I’m a girl but I’m not a bitch...And besides, I will not sink to his level.” She protested, sighing as she buried her head in her hands.

She was silent for a moment before she spoke again, this time her voice dropping to a whisper. “Besides...Just recently, he came up to me and...Told me he was in love with me.” She said somberly, wincing when Sirius’s eyes nearly bulged out of their sockets.

“And you believed him?! That perverted git just wants to get into your pants!”

Jaimee looked at him desperately, raising up her hands in desperation—only to have them slapped back down by one of the seamstresses.

“Oi! Watch it, lady!” She glared at the offending seamstress before turning back to talk to Sirius. “I—I don’t know, Sirius! Nothing that’s happening right now seems to make any sense anymore... At least not to me. I just don’t know how to respond to anything at all.” She admitted, her voice cracking slightly.

Sirius’ features softened at seeing the expression on her face.

“Look... That’s why I want you to leave all the worrying to me, okay? Right now... Just relax and try to make the most out of this entire experience. If anything, I’m sure you’ll have fun observing how we



guys make fools out of ourselves in front of beautiful girls.” He told her, winking and causing her to laugh.

“Aw, Paddy... You really think I make a beautiful girl...?” She teased lightly, laughing when Sirius snorted and rolled his eyes.

“Kiddo... You’d give Lillian Evans herself a run for her money. And that is saying something.” He told her, causing Jaimee to smile in spite of herself.

“You’re gorgeous...And I don’t mean just on the outside. I’m pretty sure you’ll knock them all dead.” He told her sincerely, reaching over and poking her nose affectionately, causing her to laugh.

“There...You’re laughing.” He mused, smiling at her antics.

Turning back to the stack of papers he held in his hand, he frowned and sighed. “In any case... You’ll be meeting with Draco tomorrow at lunch time... So try to be nice and get along. Before that, I have you scheduled to meet a Bartholomew Rowland and Wilson McAdams—both students from Durmstrang Academy.” Sirius stopped, looking shocked at himself.

“I can’t believe I just said to be nice to Malfoy... It must be the fatherly urge thing taking over again...Damn it, I knew this turning-into-a-girl thing would be trouble. It’s turning me responsible. ” He muttered in shock, rolling his eyes.

Jaimee smirked but nodded, rolling her eyes at her godfather’s antics.

“After that, we’ll be meeting with—”

“Meester Black? We ‘ave feeneeshed with our meashurrments. We will leave now, yes?” The head seamstress interrupted, causing both Sirius and Jaimee to look up—the latter one with immense relief on her features.

Sirius nodded, offering them a charming smile.

“Very well then, ladies. Thank you very much for your time and patience. When can we expect the gowns to be delivered?” He asked, flashing them another smile and causing some of the younger seamstresses to blush coyly.

“Per’aps...Thursday...Yes...? Zat will give ‘er enough time to try zem on before ze ball.” She responded, blushing darker when Sirius smiled again, bowing and planting a kiss on the back of the palms of each of the seamstresses.

Jaimee smirked at this as she climbed back down from the stool and plopped herself onto the nearby couch, wincing in pain at the marks the tight corset had left on her lithe body.

As soon as Sirius had walked all the seamstresses out of his office, he turned back to face Harry’s teasing but otherwise irritated glare.

“Paddy, must you always flirt with all the women you meet?” She scoffed, rolling her eyes when Sirius just chuckled and plopped himself down next to her, wrapping an arm around her shoulders.

“Of course...If you’ve got it, flaunt it. That’s what your father and I used to say. So... To the matter of your escort. Debutantes ask their escorts to go to the ball with them...Not the other way around. Think you can get one by yourself...?” He asked, raising an eyebrow in query.

Jaimee looked mildly insulted, glaring at him.

“Sirius, I have spent seventeen years as a guy. I have asked girls out dozens of times before...Of course, I’ll be fine. In any case, I would have gotten used to the pressure by now.” She snapped indignantly, crossing her arms over her chest.

Sirius smirked and rolled his eyes, leaning back to rest against the soft white couch they were seated on.

“Boy...You sure are pretty getting pretty cranky as a girl.” He kidded, exclaiming out loud in pain as he unsuccessfully tried to evade Harry’s painful punch to his arm.

"I'm kidding! I'm kidding!" He croaked out, rubbing his sore arm as Jaimee narrowed her eyes at him again before returning to her cross armed position with a sour look on her face.

Sirius sighed. "In any case...I'd just like to warn you about the debutante ball. Not only will all your potential suitors be there but young pureblooded wizards will be coming all over the world, looking for a bride. Some of them much older than you are." He explained, causing Harry to blink up at him in surprise.

"Older than I am...? I don't understand... I thought pureblooded families were supposed to get married by the end of the seventeenth year...? How can there be older men there?" She asked, looking genuinely curious.

Her godfather mused to himself for a minute, thinking of how to explain.

"Let's see... Well... You know how some wizards may fail to find a suitable match for themselves during their hunting season...?" He asked her, waiting for her to nod before continuing.

"Alright. Usually, as in the case of the Malfoys or Blacks, they'd have you marry any one of the pureblooded debutantes left—no matter how horribly stupid or ugly they are." Sirius explained, wincing to himself as he thought of the idea.

Jaimee looked confused but nodded for him to continue, one of her thin eyebrows raising up in query. "However...Some families are surprisingly more lenient than others. They allow their son to wait for the next season. Or the next season. Until he finds a match." He finished, smirking at the curious expression on her face.

"So... Paddy... Why aren't you married?" She asked bluntly, causing her godfather to turn an interesting shade of magenta.

"How dare you ask me such an insolent question! Young lady, go to your room!" He attempted to kid, merely causing Harry to roll her

eyes and lazily meet his glare until he finally sighed and shook his head.

He sighed, looking slightly put out.

“Alright. I knew that question had to come sooner or later. I was supposed to get married... To this really wonderful girl back then...But then I got arrested and sent to Azkaban and her parents made her marry someone else. So you know what happened after that.” He explained, causing Jaimee’s eyes to widen in guilt.

“Oh Paddy, I’m so sorry!” She managed, cupping her mouth with both her hands.

Sirius shrugged and waved it off, looking slightly irritated at having to bring it up.

“Yeah, yeah. Forget about it, it was a long time ago. I’d rather—Harry?!”

Sirius’ face froze as he witnessed his goddaughter begin to sniff softly to herself, her bright green eyes filling with unshed tears.

“Wha—?! Wh-Why are you crying?!” His voice cracked as he stared at her in utter horror, moving away slightly in case she suddenly transformed into a dark wizard actually in the guise of polyjuice potion.

Or at least something of the sort.

Jaimee looked up desperately at him, her eyes still leaking and her hands covering her mouth. “I—I don’t know, why! But I f—feel so... HORRIBLE!” She bawled, crying harder as

Sirius stumbled backwards away from her in fear, his eyes as wide as saucers.

“Ha-Harry?!”

He winced as it had come out as a tiny squeak but Jaimee didn't seem to register the sound, the young girl shaking slightly as she continued to her cry into her palms.

"I—I'm sorry...B-But... Wh—what you said was just s—so... sad..." She hiccupped and looked at him through heavy-lidded, tear-filled green eyes—both of which were looking up imploringly at him.

Just as Sirius was about to make a shaky comment about how scary the entire situation was, Jaimee had bolted up from her seat in alarm—her eyes going wide with shock and self-disgust.

"Bloody hell! Sirius! I was just crying like a bloody girl!" She raged out loud, her face flushing dark red and her eyes going wide with realization.

At that, Sirius allowed a shaky smile—pointing a trembling finger at her. "Y—yes. You were. Thank Merlin, Harry, you scared—"

He didn't get to finish his sentence when Jaimee let out a horrible, terrifying scream of horror, causing Sirius to immediately jump off the floor in panic—his eyes frantically searching the room for Voldemort.

"WHERE IS HE?! I'LL GET HIM FOR YOU, HARRY! I WON'T LET HIM TAKE YOU! SHOW YOURSELF, VOLDEMORT! SHOW YOURSEEEEEEEELF!" He screamed, waving his wand around the room maniacally and sending a flurry of sparks scorching at the expensive furniture.

But Jaimee was still screaming, her eyes shut tight and her face incredibly pale as she stumbled backwards—her hands going to wrap themselves around her form.

A horde of fearful and frantic house-elves came rushing into Sirius' office, each of them with wide fearful eyes as they searched the room for any sign of abnormality.

They found one.

“Er... Master Sirius...? You is... Bleeding on the couch, you is.” One of the house-elves spoke, gesturing to the rather large red stain that tainted the snowy white exterior of the beautiful couch Jaimee had previously been seated on.

At hearing that, Sirius stopped his maniacal hexing of the furniture and turned to look at them in horror, his eyes flicking repeatedly from the red stain on the couch to his screaming goddaughter.

“Harry?! You’re bleeding! Why are you bleeding?! Are you hurt? Are you injured?! Should I call a doctor?!” He suddenly rushed out in panic as he ran to her and began inspecting her arms—looking for the source of the wound.

Jaimee was still shaking and holding herself tightly as she looked desperately at him, her eyes wide with utter fear and anxiety.

“Am I going to die, Sirius? Am I going to die? I’m losing a lot of blood, Paddy! And I don’t know why! I’m dying!” She whimpered, her eyes beginning to fill up with tears again as Sirius finally found saw the big red stain on the back of her skirt, immediately causing him to stumble backwards again in horror.

“Oh bloody hell, Harry! It’s leaking from your arse! The bloody blood is leaking from your arse!!” He spluttered frantically and incoherently, his hands shaking as they immediately went to cover his face in panic.

Jaimee gasped out loud and spun around to inspect the stain on the back of her skirt, her face going incredibly pale as she saw the big red stain.

In utter desperation, she turned helpless green eyes to her godfather—who was still rolling around the floor in a state of complete panic.

“What am I going to do, Sirius?! What am I going to do?!” She whimpered, crawling over to him and jostling him demandingly.

“I don’t know, Harry! Do I look like I’m someone who knows what we have to do! I don’t know!” He spluttered again, managing to spray Jaimee with a good deal of spit.

Jaimee stopped and wiped the spit from her eyes for a minute before resuming her panic attack, and turning to Sirius again—oblivious of the hearty giggles that were coming from the house-elves watching near the entrance of the study.

“Make it stop, Sirius! Make it stop! MAKE IT STOP!” She screamed at him, jostling his neck and Sirius only shoved her away, burying his face into his hands.

“I’M THINKING, HARRY! I’M THINKING!”

“Ahem.”

Both Sirius and Jaimee froze for a minute and looked up to see the half-smirking, half-disapproving look on Professor McGonagall’s face as she entered the room, a small giggling house-elf trailing right after.

“Begging your pardon, Master Sirius...But I is summoning Mistress McGonagall by floo from Hogwarts as soon as I is aware of the situation.” The house-elf informed them, bowing respectfully just as Sirius and Jaimee both got up from the floor, eyeing McGonagall with a sheepish look on their faces.

“I’m rather disappointed in you, Miss Potter. This proves, more than anything, that you haven’t been reading the little manual I gave you. That goes the same for you, Black.” She spoke softly, her stern voice causing both Gryffindors to hang their head in shame.

Jaimee looked at her head of house imploringly, her eyes wide with desperation.

“Please Professor...Help me... Why have I got blood leaking from my arse?!” She asked in a hoarse whisper, turning around and showing the older woman the rather large bloody mess on her pink skirt.

Professor McGonagall blanched, one eye slightly twitching as she calmly tried to restrain herself from blowing up.

“Potter. The blood...Is not...coming out...of your posterior.” She spoke sharply, causing both Sirius and Jaimee to breathe sigh of relief.

Both were silent for a long moment before it dawned on Sirius and he finally spoke again—his eyes going completely wide with dismayed, disgusted realization.

“Oh crap... Wait a minute... So Professor McGonagall...If it isn’t coming out of her arse, then bloody hell! It’s coming out of her—”

“That will do, Black. Jaimee... Please. Come with me.”

8:00 AM

Jaimee blew several strands of hair out of her face, sighing moodily before she turned to glare icily at the rather large, overweight pompous pureblooded brat in front of her—who was currently occupied at stuffing his face with food and staring at her breasts every now and then.

Bartholomew Rowland, huh...? She thought to herself, faking a smile over the table at him just as the boy in question looked up and gave her a suggestive leer, his porky face looking gleeful as he managed another quick glance down her breasts.

More like BARF-tholomew. Ugh. I can’t believe Sirius left me alone to eat breakfast with this porker. She thought crankily, shifting her legs uncomfortably under the table as she tried to position herself in such a way so as not to create another stupid stain on her underwear.

Ugh. Stupid menstruation. I can’t believe women go through this torture every month. I feel disgusting... My back hurts. My abdomen hurts. I feel so bloody dirty...down there! And I feel like I want to scream at someone every five minutes! She thought moodily at herself, scowling as she stabbed at a piece of pancake on her plate and shoving the food into her mouth.



“So... I hear you’re really...You know...hot and stuff.” Bartholomew commented casually at her from across the thankfully long table of Sirius’ formal dining room, flashing her what he probably thought to be a seductive smile which in effect, made Jaimee smirk as it emphasized his fat droopy cheeks.

A real charmer, this one. She thought to herself, rolling her eyes and smirking wider.

“Uhm. Gee. Thanks, Bart. You do know, of course, that was I formerly a boy though, right?” She mentioned sweetly, casually taking a bite of her salmon and watching as Bartholomew flushed awkwardly.

“Er...Yeah... I heard about that. My father assured me you were 100 percent female now, though.” He told her, recovering himself and taking a long swig of his glass of milk—managing to spill some down his front.

Jaimee blanched inwardly but managed a sweet smile, lowering her eyelashes enticingly at him.

“Oh you know...As female as they come... Funny you should mention that though... Because you should consider yourself very...lucky.” She emphasized the last word with a flirty, seductive smile.

Bartholomew flushed further at that, his beady eyes widening in interest as he turned to stare intently at her.

“What do you mean by that, my dove?” He asked, a gleeful smile on his face as he intertwined his chubby fingers together and folded them expectantly on the table.

Jaimee smiled again, this time biting her lip coyly as she let her eyes drop down.

“Oh you know... It’s not everyday you get to marry someone who has the physical...tools...necessary to have sexual intercourse as both a guy and a girl.” She told him, keeping a completely straight face.

Bartholomew's left eye twitched at this, the blood in his face rushing out as he stared at her in a mixture of disgust, scandal and alarm.

Jaimee blinked prettily at him, offering him a beautiful smile just as she bit into her French toast.

"Something on your mind, sweetie? Would you like more French toast?"

The chubby boy's managed a shaky, trembling smile as he stood up and began inching his way towards the doors behind him, his eyes going to inspect her breasts as though he was having an inner debate with himself whether they were real or not.

"Erhm... Ehehe....L—Let me just...Get back to you on th—  
FATHER!!"

He never got to finish his sentence as he bolted, stumbling clumsily and sloppily all over himself out of the room, slamming the door shut behind him and bawling rather loudly in the corridors as he ran.

Jaimee smirked and turned back to her breakfast, sighing delightfully as she bit into another delicious blueberry pancake.

10:00 AM

"Try not to scare this one off, Harry. Wilson McAdams is next. He's the head boy of Durmstrang Academy. This bloke is actually nice...Really smart." Sirius sighed, chuckling to himself when Jaimee rolled her eyes moodily and she let him lead her to the conference room where Wilson and his father were waiting for them.

As soon as they had entered, both men stood up respectfully and a meek looking, otherwise relatively good-looking brunette smiled at Jaimee, offering her a bouquet of assorted flowers.

Jaimee managed a weak smile at him as she accepted them, waiting until Sirius and his father had shook hands before both men gestured for her to sit down across Wilson, who looked rather nervous as he fidgeted with his hands.

“Well... Black and I will talk between ourselves in his office. You two have around two hours to get to know each other a bit more.” Wilson’s father told them, smiling encouragingly at his son before Sirius escorted him out of the room.

Before he left, however, he shot Jaimee another warning look to behave—causing the girl to smirk wider at him just before she turned to give a sweet, innocent smile at Wilson, who was looking as though he wanted the ground to open up and swallow him whole.

“Whoa. Relax there, Wilson. I’m not going to bite you.” She told him, laughing lightly at the expression on his face.

Wilson looked slightly irritated at that, giving her a self-righteous look.

“I’m not nervous about you, Miss Potter... I’m merely nervous about not sending the right academic impression. After all...I am head boy, I have certain intellectual standards to uphold.” He informed her, not catching the blanch that had appeared on Jaimee’s face.

“Oh...So...I take it... You like school, huh?” She asked rather warily, forcing a smile at him when his face had lit up at her words.

He nodded excitedly at her, gesturing to the books he had on his laps.

“Not just school, Miss Potter. I love learning. I believe that one shouldn’t waste a single second if not in the pursuit of knowledge. Which is why I have several books for you... I believe it’ll allow us to incite more intellectual conversation the next time we meet. And perhaps, if we are to be married, we can read books together for fun.” He told her, failing once again to notice the dismayed expression on Jaimee’s face.

“H—How nice. Uhm. Will you excuse me... I have my period today and my cramps are getting a tad bit excruciating. Let me just go to the bathroom.” She told him tightly, rising from her seat.

Wilson immediately stood up as she did, looking genuinely concerned.

“Are you okay...? I’ve read up on menstruation, just so you know... I think the best way for you to deal with cramps is to take some well-prescribed painkillers. I suggest—”

“Thank you, Wilson. I’ll just... I just need to go to the bathroom.” She told him, trying her best to keep herself from running out of the room.

Fuming silently to herself and discreetly adjusting her skirt so as to make sure she didn’t get a stain later on, she crankily made her way over to Sirius’ office—only to find her godfather chatting and chuckling with Wilson’s father over a bottle of fine red wine.

Gesturing to him from outside, Sirius excused himself briefly from the other man before he walked out of the office and closed the door behind him, turning around to face a raving, moody Jaimee.

“What’s wrong? Where’s Wilson?” He asked, looking around.

“He’s a bloody NERD!”

Sirius’ eyes widened at that and he held up a finger to his lips to indicate for her to keep quiet, looking frantically around the corridor before speaking.

“So he’s...smart. Can you honestly blame a guy for being smart? He seems nice enough.” He reasoned but Jaimee cut him off again, stamping her foot onto the floor.

“No! I’m bloody smart, Sirius. I can appreciate learning every now and then. But this guy?! No. He’s a bloody dork. He wants us to read as a married couple for Merlin’s sake! And he brought me books so we can have something to talk about next time! Trust me, Sirius. Make it clear. I do not want a next time!” She raged crankily, stamping her foot again and making Sirius wince at her temper.

“Alright, alright! I’ll tell them. But you’re going to have to find a way to break the news to Wilson first yourself, Harry. I won’t tell his father about it, he’s a really nice guy. Tell him you don’t think you’d be compatible or something. Do it nicely.” He warned her, sighing before

he turned and walked back into his study, leaving Jaimee to her thoughts.

Tell him myself?! How?! She roared at herself, fuming as she stomped back down the hall to the meeting room. As soon as she had entered, Wilson had stood up again, giving her another friendly smile.

She returned it briefly as she sat down, watching as Wilson handed her the books—waiting for her reaction at his selection. She winced as she accepted them, holding them in her lap and running her hand over the smooth covers.

Then, it hit her.

She masked a devious smirk behind her hand and began blinking coyly at the books he had handed her, allowing a light giggle to escape her lips.

“Ooh... They’re so... heavy.” She observed stupidly, giggling again and flashing him a dimwitted smile.

Wilson returned the smile hesitantly, looking confused at her comment, before shrugging it off and gestured to one of them.

“I think you’d find them interesting. One of them talks about feminism in the early eighties—particularly on how—”

“Ooh, I like this book. It’s pink.” She commented again, giggling once more as she picked up the pink book and began running her hands over it, hugging the book to her chest.

Wilson winced at this, one of his eyebrows raising rather indignantly as he stared at her in utter disbelief.

“I...Uhm. Yes, it’s pink, Jaimee. Do you...uh...like pink?” He asked rather awkwardly, looking slightly perturbed as she nodded enthusiastically and stood up, still holding the book to her chest.

“It’s such a cute color, don’t you think? And look how it matches so prettily with my dress! I think I’ll carry this book around me today... It goes so well with my outfit.” She gushed, giggling to herself as she modeled around the room with the book clutched tightly against her chest.

Wilson gave her a helpless smile as he managed a nod at her antics, trying to explain above her loud gushing and giggles as she began fawning over her gown, her hair and appearance in a nearby mirror.

“Yes, well you’re very pretty, Miss Jaimee. Now... I’ve left a reading list with your godfather in case you’re interested in more of my favorite books. It would be nice if you’d get the chance to read them.” He told her, watching as Jaimee twirled her skirt around and faced him, looking surprised.

“Oh that list? Yes, I’ve finished with that, already.” She told him, giggling coyly.

Wilson’s eyes lit up once more and he gave her a surprised smile, looking impressed.

“You’ve finished all fifteen books already?” He asked her, gazing at her in admiration.

She shook her head, frowning as hastily adjusted her hair before speaking.

“I meant I read the list.” She announced proudly, turning to give him an expectant smile.

Wilson’s smile froze on his face, his eyes turning from adoring to murderous as he looked as though he wanted to stuff one of the couch pillows down Jaimee’s throat in frustration.

“Sweetheart, can you give me a pretty green book as well? I’d like one I can carry with my green gown too.” She told him, turning back to inspect herself in the mirror.

“Uhm, will you excuse me, Miss Jaimee? I’d like to talk to my father.” He told her, nodding politely to her before he promptly excused himself out of the room, leaving Jaimee staring after him in surprise.

As soon as he was gone, the dumb, innocent smile on her face slowly formed itself into a sly, devious smirk. Placing the pink book gingerly on the table behind her, she sat back down onto the couch and sighed happily, looking pleased with herself.

“This is fun.”

A/N: Hahaha! I’m sorry but I just love the way Harry plays all these men around like that. More in the next chapter! Don’t forget to leave me a review and tell me your thoughts! More thoughts give me more ideas and more ideas means faster updates. :wink-wink: PLEASE REVIEW!

## Chapter 10 – Meet the Malfoys

12:00 PM

“Draco, stop fidgeting.” Lucius admonished as they sat in one of the lush couches in the waiting parlor of Black Manor, both men waiting rather impatiently for their registered appointment with Jaimee that afternoon for lunch.

Draco tugged at his collar, scowling as he turned to glare at his father.

“I can’t help it. I can’t believe mother made me wear this stuffy suit.” He complained loudly, causing Lucius to chuckle in spite of himself.

“In any case, Draco, you look very presentable. So stop fidgeting around and act like the proper aristocrat you are.” He told him, causing Draco to sigh and sit up straight, glancing around the room.

It was good couple of minutes before Sirius Black came walking out of the nearby living rooms and greeted with a rather sour smile on his face particularly directed towards Lucius—who returned this with a smirk of his own.

“Lucius... How are you? How’s my cousin?” He managed to say stiffly, walking over to them and shaking the older Malfoy’s hand. Lucius responded with a regal nod of his head, gesturing to Draco beside him with his cane.

“I am perfectly well, Black. And Narcissa is as well as can be expected. You remember my son, Draco.” He gestured, causing Draco to smirk in amusement and Sirius to growl under his breath as he turned to look at the handsome young Slytherin.

“Yes, how could I forget? The sole reason my godson is now a woman.” Sirius replied, his voice surprisingly pleasant amidst the dangerous glint in his eyes.

“A pleasure it is to meet you too.” Draco replied easily, still smiling when Sirius narrowed his eyes at him but otherwise gestured for both



men to follow him into the main foyer where he told them to wait by the bottom of the stairs.

“Jaimee should be coming down any minute now. I’ve arranged for her and Draco to have lunch in the dining room later while you and I, Lucius, will have lunch and discuss other matters in the terrace.” Sirius told them, watching as both men nodded their assent.

He took a step closer to Draco and looked the blonde directly in the eye, allowing the Slytherin to see the murderous look in them. Draco gulped slightly and took a step back, managing a weak grin.

“If you so much as lay a finger on Jaimee... I will castrate you, Malfoy.” He hissed under his breath so that Lucius wouldn’t hear.

Draco merely sneered at him in response, his eyes narrowing haughtily.

“I think Harry can pretty much castrate me herself.”

Sirius smirked at his quip but nodded. He was about to turn to talk to Lucius when all three men stopped just as Jaimee appeared at the top of the stairs—looking absolutely stunning with her hair framing her face and wearing an elegant black turtle-neck dress that accentuated her figure perfectly.

Her eyes narrowed briefly upon seeing Draco gaping stupidly up at her but she composed herself and began walking gingerly down the stairs, allowing the blonde Slytherin a glimpse of each beautiful leg as she moved.

The dress was amazingly sexy and sophisticated at the same time—ending a good couple of inches above her knee and showing a generous amount of her long gorgeous legs. The tight material clung to every feminine curve she had, drawing Draco’s eyes to each of them as his eyes took everything in hungrily from head to toe.

She’s barely wearing any make-up at all. He observed admiringly, resting his eyes on her exquisite features and loving the way she

hadn't decorated her face with needless colors or sparkles like some of the other girls used to date.

All she wore, he observed, was a simple pink shade of lip gloss—and even that Draco seriously doubted as to how or why Harry Potter would ever have learned to wear lip gloss in the first place.

He noticed, with some degree of amusement, that she was wearing very sexy but otherwise very dangerous stiletto-heeled shoes and he was just about to point that out when Jaimee promptly gasped in surprise as one heeled foot tipped slightly, causing her to fall forward.

Acting reflexively, Draco rushed forward and caught the Gryffindor easily in his arms, chuckling lightly to himself as he steadied her back on her feet.

“Careful, Potter... You should really watch where you step with those shoes. You could hurt yourself.” He teased, smirking when Jaimee turned a bright red and slapped his hands away, giving him an angry glare.

“Oh shut up, Malfoy. You try walking in these stupid high heels!” She snapped at him, growling as she saw him laughing again and promptly stomping onto his left foot with one of her sharp heels.

“OW!” Draco winced loudly in pain as he lifted his foot up and inspected it carefully before turning to give her an icy glare.

“WHY YOU BI—”

“Why don't you escort young, beautiful Jaimee here to the dining room, Draco? I'm sure both of you are famished.” Lucius interrupted hastily, glaring pointedly at his son—who in turn was still rubbing his sore foot in anger, turning every now and then to give Jaimee a disgruntled sneer.

Jaimee returned this with a sweet smile, haughtily offering one gloved hand to Draco. “Lead the way, Malfoy.” She taunted, her eyes narrowing at him suspiciously.

Draco took her hand and did as he was told, grumbling under his breath as he watched Sirius and Lucius watch them carefully before heading out towards the terraces, leaving both teenagers alone to one another's company.

Just as they reached the dining room, Draco walked forward and was about to pull a chair back for her but Jaimee had already sat down on the chair across from him, causing the Slytherin to roll his eyes in half-irritation, and half-amusement.

"So Malfoy... What brings you here?" She asked casually as she watched him take his seat and carefully placed the table napkin onto his lap. Scowling at the fact that she had forgotten to do it herself, she allowed herself to do the same before she turned back to look at him, seeing the smirk in his eyes.

"You look really gorgeous, Potter." He told her, offering her a genuine smile.

In spite of herself, Jaimee felt a very hot blush creeping up to her face—causing her to cough loudly and grab a nearby muffin, munching on it to distract herself.

"I rather enjoyed our little fight a couple of days ago. Although I must say... I'm rather interested in a rematch. I believe you cheated me out of a fair game there, Potter." Draco commented casually, reaching over and taking a small sip the wine one of the serving house elves had poured into his goblet.

"You wish, Malfoy. The day I fight you again is the day Voldemort grows a nose." She answered bluntly, causing the Slytherin to laugh in amusement.

"Why? Are you scared of losing to me? Is that why you've been ignoring me these past few days?" He asked her innocently, reaching over and taking an apple from the plate of fruits in front of him.

Jaimee scoffed, taking a small bite of her steak and pretending to consider the idea. "Harry Potter? Scared of you, Malfoy? Now when will that ever happen?" She countered, laughing lightly.

Draco smiled again, inspecting her features carefully as he took a small bite of his mash potatoes. "Oh I don't know, Harry. You seem to be scared of me now." He pointed out, causing the Gryffindor to freeze up in shock and turn to glare at him in question.

"What? What are you talking about, Malfoy?" She snapped, crossing her arms and narrowing her eyes at him.

Draco laughed again, taking a small bite of his own steak and chewing carefully before answering her.

"Come on, Potter. Don't tell me none of this scares you. I know it does...A lot. If anything, you're terrified at all that's been happening. You turning into a girl... Your rival courting you...The thought of getting married... Getting pregnant... I'd be terrified if it were me." He told her pointedly, managing to cause her glare to intensify.

"Then of course there's the fact that I'm in love with you... So of course you're—"

"Wait, wait, wait! Hold on a minute there, Malfoy. What exactly do you mean by that?" She demanded, setting down her fork and gazing intently at him.

At her expression, Draco felt his cheeks redden slightly as he turned away to avoid her gaze. "Oh what do you know, Potter? Shut up." He snapped, causing Jaimee's eyes to flare up instantly.

"You stupid ferret-face. If I wasn't wearing heels right now, I'd kick your arse." She threatened darkly, much to Draco's amusement as he merely scoffed at her.

"Yeah, right. You punch like a girl, Potter. Do you really think you can physically fight me?" He taunted, chuckling and causing Jaimee to stand up from her seat.

"Oh you think so, Draco? Then let me prove it to you." She growled as she walked over to him, challenging him to stand up and call her bluff.

Draco didn't hesitate to respond as he easily stood up and towered over her with his height, sneering at her as he crossed his arms over his chest and raised a single eyebrow expectantly.

"You see, I would love to kick your arse, Harry. But I'm supposed to be here courting you and making a good impression so I think I'll pass." He told her sweetly, leaning over and placing a kiss on her cheek, causing them to redden in embarrassment.

Then, once again, an idea hit her and she smiled rather sexily at him—a devious glint in her beautiful green eyes.

"A good impression, huh...?"

Draco's eyes narrowed as she slowly lifted one corner of her lips into an alluring smile, allowing her bottom lip to make its way coyly in between her teeth.

"Potter..." Draco said out loud, shooting her a warning glare as he took a step back away from her—knowing full well what he was up against.

Jaimee chuckled under her breath, taking a careful step toward him—deliberately drawing his attention to the smooth leg revealed by her short skirt.

"Draco... Will you do me a favor?" She asked sweetly, making sure to glance at him with a heavy-lidded passionate gaze, immediately causing the head boy to flush a very heated dark red.

"Wh-What is it, Harry...?"

Jaimee smiled at him, laughing coyly.

"Touch this." She grabbed his left hand put it daringly on her left breast.

“Don’t mind if I do—YARGHH!” Draco immediately pulled his hand away and stumbled backwards from her, turning as red as a tomato and shaking his head hastily.

“Come on, Draco... I know you want to... None of the house-elves are here, anyway.” Jaimee whispered seductively, smirking at the scandalized glare Draco was shooting her.

“I know what you’re trying to do, Potter. You’re trying to get me caught molesting you and make me look bad. I will not let you win! I won’t!” He snapped at her, glaring accusingly at the Gryffindor girl in front of him.

Jaimee threw up both hands in the air in surrender, nodding. “Alright. You caught me, Malfoy. I won’t try anything.” She agreed, nodding before she turned around and bent forward to adjust the straps on her shoes.

“Damn these shoes... They’re just so horribly tight.” She commented casually, bending over and allowing her dress to ride up higher along her legs—immediately drawing Draco’s eyes to the exposed creamy skin and causing the Slytherin to whimper helplessly.

“P—P—Potter...” He managed weakly, frantically shaking his head to clear his mind.

“Hold on, Draco... Let me just...” Her voice trailed off and she bent over further, smirking to herself as she was completely aware of Draco’s eyes following the dress’ every movement.

“Oh Merlin...” Draco muttered under his breath as he gulped, wanting nothing more than to shove Jaimee onto the floor and have his wicked way with her right then and there but instead, he took another step backwards from her, shaking his hand.

“Stop it, Potter. I’m not falling for it.” He told her, smirking at the exasperated look on her face as she stood back up and scowled defiantly at him, looking irritated.

“Although I must say, you have got the most incredible legs I have ever seen.” He told her, chuckling as she growled under her breath again, this time stepping towards him.

Draco barely had any time to react when Jaimee suddenly launched herself at him, grabbing him by the front of his suit and slamming him against the nearest wall before she pressed herself against him and caught his lips in a hard, passionate kiss.

His eyes had widened at first at her surprising display of feminine aggressiveness but now they shut themselves tight and he lost all form of rational thought as he wrapped his arms around her waist and pulled her closer against him, urging her to open her mouth with his tongue’s administrations.

As soon as she obliged, Draco allowed himself to taste her completely—reveling in her delectable taste of combined chocolate and strawberries. As their tongues battled almost as fiercely as they themselves did as rivals for seven years, Jaimee let out a soft, delightful moan—successfully sending all of Draco’s blood down south.

Completely rendered senseless by his hormones, he reversed their positions and slammed her violently against the wall instead—trapping her against it with his body and pinning both her arms above her head with single one of his own.

She moaned again, closing her eyes as Draco’s lips moved briefly to nibble behind her ear. His free hand had travelled upwards and was now caressing her breast almost possessively, sending delightful tingles down her spine.

Jaimee smirked amidst their intertwined lips at that, watching as the doors to the dining room suddenly opened and her godfather and Lucius walked in, both men exclaiming loudly as they came upon the shocking scene that greeted them.

Draco had Jaimee pinned against the wall—one of his hands kept both of hers trapped above her head against the wall, their lips were forcefully intertwined and he had his other hand caressing her breast.

Oh yes, Jaimee sensed this victory was hers.

Immediately, Draco flinched and shoved himself away from her—reddening in embarrassment just as Jaimee masked her face with a helpless pout at her godfather, who was torn between smirking at her ingenuity and murdering Draco.

“It was Malfoy, Sirius... He was trying to take advantage of me!” She told him, pointing accusingly at Draco, who shook his head wildly in denial—his silver eyes flashing darkly in anger as he glared at her.

In desperation, he turned to his father—who was now looking at him in evident disapproval at having lost his self-control.

“Father! She’s a slimy little liar! She was seducing me, father! She kissed me first! I swear it!” He defended himself, glaring angrily at Jaimee who was now smirking at him in triumph.

She scoffed and laughed, giving him a pointed sneer.

“Oh sure, Malfoy... That’s believable. I would never throw myself at you.” She retorted, sneering wider at the look of death flashing dangerously in the Slytherin’s eyes.

“Draco... Shush. We’ll discuss the consequences of this reprehensible mistake later.” Lucius hissed, turning to give Sirius an apologetic half-smile.

“Sirius...Allow me to apologize for my son’s behavior. I implore you to not list this as a reason for not selecting him as your goddaughter’s match this season. May we return to your office to work out the consequences of this little setback?” He asked hastily, shooting another glare at Draco.

Sirius growled darkly at this, turning to give Draco a very menacing glare. “Let’s see what we can do, Lucius.” He responded stiffly, leading Lucius out of the room once more.



Lucius shot Draco another glare as he left, which Draco in turn reflected back to Harry—the said girl now calmly walking back to her seat and returning to her lunch.

Then, in spite of himself, he allowed himself to smirk at her.

“You little Slytherin...”

Jaimee didn’t respond, merely taking another bite of her lunch while altogether trying to ignore his presence.

Draco seemed to have other ideas as he walked over to her and yanked her up, causing her to exclaim loudly in surprise as she was shoved back roughly against the wall—this time both of Draco’s hands going to rest against the wall above her head—successfully trapping her in.

She looked up to find him glaring at her with dark, smoldering gray eyes—each orb focused intently on her as he shot her an odd, calculating look.

“What?!” She snapped, giving him a sneer.

Draco looked intently at her, his facial expression still unreadable.

“Kiss me again, Potter.”

She looked at him with an incredulous expression, her eyes wide with mockery and disbelief.

“Excuse me? Have you completely lost your mind? Besides, I just did, Malfoy. What more do you want?” She retorted, narrowing her eyes at him but Draco shook his head, gasping her chin with one hand and turning her face up intently to meet his, their lips inches apart.

“Potter. You kissed me as a guy. It was fueled with lust and animosity. I want you to kiss me as a girl. Or at least let me show you how.” He spoke softly, gripping her chin more tightly when she tried to turn her face away.

“No way, Malfoy.” She snapped, glaring defiantly at him as Draco merely chuckled, shaking his head and using another hand to brush a stray strand of hair away from her eyes.

“All this chemistry and tension between us. You feed off it. And turn it into anger when you kiss me. I want you to let it all go... And just kiss me.” He replied, leaning towards her. She turned her head and his lips landed on her cheek, caressing the skin softly.

“I’m a guy, Malfoy... Do you really think all your seduction crap is going to work on me? I know all that—hell, I used to do it myself.” She drawled easily, but her smirk faltered when he gazed intently into her eyes.

“You don’t have to be so tough anymore, you know. I already know you are...I’m not trying to prove otherwise.” He responded, leaning over again and this time planting a soft, gentle kiss on her cheek.

Jaimee felt a blush rising at that and she struggled to get away from him, only managing to make Draco’s strong arms wrap tighter around her form.

“Do you really have so much to lose, Potter...? One kiss... isn’t going to matter. Like you said... You’re a guy...” Draco whispered, leaning over once more but this time stopping just as both their lips were mere inches apart.

Jaimee felt her breath hitch sharply in her throat as she let her heavy gaze linger on his lips, watching as the corners of his mouth seemed to twitch upwards into a seductive smile—teasing her as he waited for her next move.

“Come on, Potter... Don’t tell me you’re going to refuse a challenge.”

That did it.

Jaimee leaned forward and pressed her lips very gently against his, immediately gasping as she felt a hot, electric surge through her body—coursing through her veins from the first moment their lips had touched.

Draco smiled sweetly within their intertwined lips and caressed her cheek gently, urging her to keep still as he began to kiss her very lovingly—his lips almost feather-light as they caressed hers, drinking in the sweet taste of her lips.

She moaned softly as her fingers made their way behind his neck, pulling their faces closer together and he obliged by wrapping one arm securely around her waist, the other one moving upwards to entangle in her hair.

Both their heads were spinning wildly out of control as they deepened the kiss, each of them momentarily forgetting the need for oxygen as they robbed the other of breath altogether. Their hearts pounded rapidly against their chest as they pulled back slightly for air before crashing their lips together once more.

This is so wrong...God, why does it feel so damn good...? Jaimee thought to herself, sighing blissfully as Draco pulled her closer almost tenderly against him, his administrations so innocently passionate that she began melting in his arms.

As though he heard her, he slowed the kiss down to a very gentle caress before pulling back softly and allowing her to see the intense expression in his eyes as he gazed at her, his hand moving to tuck the stray strand of hair behind her ear.

Questioning green stared silently into smoldering silver for a long moment, both teenagers unwilling to speak as they took in each other's features—from their flushed faces, thoroughly red lips to their heavy breathing as they tried to catch their breath.

It was another long moment before Draco finally spoke up, the Slytherin sighing as his hands dropped and he looked at her in question—his eyes silent and demanding as they implored into hers.

“Are you really so against marrying me, Potter?” He asked her quietly, his eyes moving to square up calmly against her own blazing glare.

Jaimee was still silent for a long moment before she seemed to snap and she blinked rapidly, looking at him as though he was insane. She began shaking her head furiously, her cheeks going red with embarrassment.

“Are you insane?! Of course I am! You’re my rival for Merlin’s sake! We’ve been at each other’s throats for seven years! You’re the reason I’m a bloody girl in the first place!” She ranted, walking up to him and looking up directly in the eye.

Surprisingly enough, they were almost equal in height—and with Jaimee’s high heels, she could look him directly in the face without having to lean up for support. Draco seemed to notice this too and the corners of his lips lifted into a half-grin.

“Then why is it that everything about you seems so perfectly tailored to fit with me?” He asked her softly, reaching a hand carefully to stroke her cheek once more—reveling in its silky texture.

“Why is it that everything about you...Your lips, your size...Your body...Everything... seems to fit so perfectly against me?” He asked her again, his voice dropping into a whisper as he tried to kiss her again but this time, Jaimee took a step back and shoved him away, shaking her head.

She inhaled sharply, her eyes clouding over in confusion as she saw the genuine fondness in his eyes, causing her to step back slightly in surprise.

“Malfoy, why are you doing this?”

“Marry me, Jaimee. No— Marry me, Harry Potter. I have always wanted you. Always. Even as a guy, you were completely irresistible to me. And call me selfish but now that you’re a girl, everything is so damn perfect.” He told her, his voice so deep and sincere that Jaimee felt a shiver run down her spine.

She sighed and shook her head, avoiding Draco’s intense, penetrating gaze.

“No...Malfoy, I can't. Things are going way too fast. I can't just erase seven years of animosity between us... Everything is just not that simple. You don't even know me—”

“I know you so much more than you think, Potter.”

Jaimee hesitated again, shaking her head. “I don't even know you.” She countered.

“We'll have the rest of our lives for you to do that.” Draco replied easily, reaching over and taking one of her hands, squeezing it tightly with his strong fingers.

She hesitated again, feeling her heart pounding very painfully against her chest.

“I had so many dreams as a guy. I wanted to become an Auror. I wanted to work in the Ministry of Magic. What do you expect me to do? Sit around at a prissy little parlor waiting for you to come home?” She asked, sneering at him but Draco adamantly shook his head and squeezed her hand.

“I'm not asking you to give up any of those things. In fact, I'd be devastated if you ever did. You were my equal in everything as a guy. None of that is going to change now. Hell, you beat me in a magical combat for Merlin's sake! All I'm asking for is a chance with you, Harry.” He replied evenly, watching as Jaimee's eyes seemed to cloud over in heavy thought at his words.

“After everything we've been through...Everything you've done to me...How do you expect me to believe you now, Malfoy?” She replied darkly, her eyes narrowing into slits and her lips curling into a derisive sneer.

Draco hesitated for a second and before he could answer, she had spoken again, this time her voice dropping to an angry hiss.

“How do I know you're not just looking for a hot piece of ass, Malfoy? Oh don't try to hide it—I know how you men see me. I've been there. I was a man. I know how every time you look at me, all you see is sex.

Am I supposed to believe that you, of all people, would actually feel that sincerely about a freak like me?" She countered, her voice dripping with disdain and sarcasm.

He smiled easily at that, highly amused at her sentiments.

"I won't deny I find you incredibly attractive, Potter. You'll make me a beautiful wife and bear me wonderful children. But more than that, I am completely and utterly enamored with your fierce fighting spirit and courage. And the fact that I fell in love with you the day you punched me in the Great Hall proves it." He told her, chuckling at the dark blush that had crept onto her face.

Jaimee was visibly trembling now and she took a step back once more, yanking her hand away from him shaking her head.

"Ha...Alright... So you're good with words around the ladies, Malfoy. But you don't fool me...No, no...Not one bit. I'm a guy, I won't fall for your perfectly seductive articulation and elegance in speaking...Not one bit." She stammered, still shaking her head.

"I'm not trying to fool you."

Jaimee winced again and took another step backwards, her face going pale.

"Malfoy, will you please...Uhm... Sneer at me or something? Or insult me! Anything but this crazy act you've got going on here because you're really starting to scare me." Jaimee stammered, laughing nervously.

Draco wasn't listening anymore and instead, he had gotten down on one knee onto the floor—immediately causing Jaimee's eyes to widen like saucers as she stared at him as though he was insane.

"Wh—What are you doing?! Malfoy! Stop that! Get up off the floor!" She shrieked at him, backing away hastily and stumbling rather clumsily against the dining table behind her. Draco wasn't listening however and was busy digging through his suit for something in his

pocket—something Jaimee was positively sure she did not want him to find.

He grinned slightly when his fingers finally clasped around the small offending object and immediately, he pulled it out—allowing Jaimee to see the beautiful velvet box he held up to her in his hand.

At that, Jaimee whimpered and collapsed onto a nearby chair in front of him, burying her face into her hands.

“Harry Potter... Will you marr—”

Unfortunately, he never got to finish his question as a rather loud bang behind them caused them both to whirl around in surprise to see a small house-elf rushing frantically into the room, his hands gesturing wildly to the two people following behind him.

“Begging your pardon, Mistress Jaimee! Begging your pardon! But you is having visitors, you is! They is asked Lippy to escort them here, Mistress!” The house-elf named Lippy announced, rushing over to Jaimee and bowing to her in apology.

Jaimee’s eyes immediately tore themselves from Draco’s heavily disappointed expression only to widen in question at the two approaching figures in the dining room entrance—one of them blonde, the other dark-haired--and both looking at them with identical smirks on their faces.

As soon as Jaimee had nodded her understanding to Lippy, the house-elf had bounded off back towards the kitchens—leaving both Jaimee and Draco stare up at the new visitors in query.

Highly annoyed, Draco stood up immediately, his face immediately twisting into an angry sneer at the offending visitors. Just as he was about to bite out a rather rude comment about respecting schedule, his eyes had widened at having recognized one of the two men in front of him followed by all the blood rushing out of his handsome face.

“I beg your pardon, Miss Potter. I hope you forgive us for our rather rude and unexpected arrival.” One of the men had spoken, stepping forward and allowing Jaimee to see his prominently regal features. Like many pureblooded wizards, he was carrying a crested cane in one hand and carried a hat in the other, along with his wand.

His dark hair had been gelled back neatly from his handsome, otherwise sophisticated features, allowing Jaimee to see his silver eyes and perfectly chiseled nose. It wasn't his features that had attracted her however as her eyes were now staring widely at the younger man beside him, both green orbs blinking repeatedly in disbelief.

Bloody hell... He looks like Draco! She thought to herself in shock as she gaped stupidly at him, her eyes traveling from the unmistakable silver blonde hair, the pale, handsome aristocratic face and the smug sneer that was in place.

The only viable difference she observed was that this boy's eyes were a mesmerizing shade of ocean blue and noticing her staring at him, the boy gave her a charming smile, immediately causing Jaimee to blush and look away.

“Allow me to introduce myself. I am—”

“Uncle Louis. What a pleasant surprise seeing you here.” Interrupted Draco's sarcastic tone of voice as he sneered at them, walking up behind Jaimee and causing the two men's eyes to widen with surprise and recognition.

“Draco, my dear nephew. What ever are you doing here?” The man named Louis had exclaimed in feigned surprise, chuckling slightly he observed Jaimee's befuddled look of confusion.

“Well, Uncle...I don't mean to be rude but I'm here for the same reason you and Anton are. And just to tell you—cousin—I saw her first.” Draco hissed angrily, directing his words towards the younger blue-eyed wizard who appeared to be his cousin.



Anton smiled pleasantly at Draco first then let his eyes travel to Jaimee, allowing himself to walk up to her and take her hand, planting a charming kiss on the back of her palm.

“Ah... Miss Jillian Aimee Potter. You are as beautiful as they all say you are. Perhaps so much more.” He spoke with a voice deeper than Draco’s and Jaimee noticed that it was heavily intoned with a natural French accent, piquing her interest.

As soon as he had stepped closer, Jaimee noticed how Anton’s blonde hair—unlike Draco’s—was much longer and that he had it tied neatly behind his head in a short ponytail, several shorter wisps of hair falling down sexily into his blue eyes.

“Uhm...”

Draco’s eyes narrowed at her reaction but Anton had chuckled and flashed Jaimee another smile, causing the Gryffindor girl to blush darker as she stared into his handsome features.

“I’m Anton Louis Levinsour Malfoy. It is a pleasure to finally meet you.” He introduced himself, bowing his head courteously and allowing Jaimee to glimpse of his perfect rows of pearly white teeth.

Having him so near however, Jaimee instantly and unknowingly felt her face heat up, causing her to step back in alarm. She felt an unexplainable urge to throw herself at the new stranger and it irked her that she didn’t know why.

She turned a questioning look to Draco, who in turn, sneered derisively at his relatives. He was just about to explain something when Lucius and Sirius had finally re-entered the room, the former exclaiming rather negatively in recognition.

“Louis! Anton! I cannot believe it... I thought Anton here had already been engaged off to young Elisa for this coming month!” Lucius drawled angrily, his eyes narrowing as he saw his relatives.

Sirius looked confused now and his gaze flicked frantically from one pureblooded aristocrat to another before shooting Jaimee a

questioning look which the girl returned with a shrug. Seeing this, Louis seemed amused and held up a hand to silence both Lucius and Draco's intended reactions.

"Allow me introduce myself properly, Mister Black. Miss Potter. My name is Louis Gabriel Malfoy and this handsome young man right here is my heir and only son, Anton Louis. I am Lucius' younger brother and Anton—as you can probably well observe—is Draco's first cousin." He gestured briefly to the two young Malfoys, who sneered at each other in acknowledgement.

Sirius had walked up behind Jaimee and placed a hand on her shoulder, looking from one blonde to the other. He shot her another inquiring look but she looked just as confused as he was as they watched the scene unfold in front of them.

"My wife, Lizette, is French, which is why we reside in Paris, London. Unlike Draco here, my son Anton is home-schooled instead by the finest and most dedicated scholars in Europe. He and my only daughter—his twin, Lorraine—are exactly young Draco and Jaimee's age." He continued, nodding approvingly at his son.

"We are here because we would like to formally begin courting negotiations with young Jaimee this season. I am certain that she and Anton will find much in common and I am quite eager to propose a match between the two of them." He finished, immediately causing both Draco and Lucius to sputter indignantly in outrage.

Anton smiled at this and turned to Jaimee, who took another wary step backwards away from him as once again—she felt another magnetic pull towards him, the feeling so strong and unnatural that it made her suspicious.

Sirius didn't seem to notice this as he smirked at both Lucius and Draco's reactions and watched as all three Malfoys—Lucius, Draco and Louis—were caught between a heated argument, all of which seemingly unaware of his presence.

Still smirking, he walked up to them and made a loud, rather rude whistle—causing all three men to stare at him in annoyance.

“Hmm. It looks like we have serious matters to discuss here then, Louis. Why don’t we talk about this some more in my office? Bring Anton with you, I have some questions for him as well.” Sirius drawled, immediately causing Lucius to round on him.

“What?! Black, this is preposterous! By accepting the proposal of Jaimee and my son as a match, you cannot possibly consider Anton as another! He and Draco are cousins for Merlin’s sake!” He screeched, causing Sirius to raise an eyebrow haughtily at him.

“There’s no law that prohibits me from pitting cousin against cousin for my goddaughter, Lucius. Besides, consider how your son acted rather despicably awhile ago in molesting my goddaughter, I’m thinking perhaps Anton would be a more responsible decision to go along with.” He retorted spitefully, causing Draco to redden in embarrassment and Louis to smirk in triumph.

Jaimee couldn’t hold it in anymore, she looked from Anton to Draco to Sirius, her eyebrows scrunched together.

“Sirius... Is there something about Anton that I should—”

“He’s half-Veela.” Draco drawled flatly with his voice blunt and derisive, causing Anton to glare angrily at him in annoyance.

“Like that matters to her, Draco!” He snapped back, narrowing his eyes at him but Draco merely snorted in response, sneering at his cousin.

“Spare me. You were using your Veela charm on her the moment you arrived. Don’t think I didn’t notice. Please. Using that little power of yours was the only reason you got laid.” He mocked, immediately causing Anton to sneer spitefully at him.

Jaimee’s head was spinning as she tried to take this in all at once.

“Ha-Half...Veela?”

“My wife, you see...Is a full Veela. Both my children—Anton and Lorraine—are half-Veela and possess, as you say, a certain attraction charm around them.” Louis explained awkwardly, causing Sirius to gape at him and Lucius to scoff in derision.

Then, after recovering himself, Sirius finally turned to Lucius before speaking. “Well, Veela or not... I am obliged to discuss matters of a possible courtship between Anton and Jaimee with Louis at the moment. If I may, Lucius, I’d like to thank you for coming here today.” Sirius said, nodding stiffly at the other man who returned the polite gesture.

“Very well, Sirius. If you must know...Louis here—has always been one never to respect tradition. Just like he and his son barged in here and interrupted my son’s personal time with Jaimee. Nevertheless, being gentlemen, we shall excuse the intrusion and be on our way.” Lucius answered gracefully, sneering at his younger brother.

Louis seemed only happy to return the favor, bowing to Lucius before he turned back to Sirius—engaging the other man in a series of interested questions.

“Come Draco. Let’s be going.” Lucius ushered, gesturing to his son.

Draco nodded and turned to look at Jaimee—who was still currently locked in a conversation with Anton at the moment to have noticed that he was leaving.

“I’ll see you at school tomorrow, Potter.” Draco offered, trying to divert her attention but Jaimee had only laughed at something Anton was saying, causing Draco’s eyes to flash dangerously in jealousy.

“Are you really half-Veela? Is that why I’ve been feeling a strong pull towards you?” Jaimee asked Anton, her face genuinely curious and he nodded rather guiltily, flashing her a rueful smile.

“Yes, I am. I apologize for using the charm on you. But as you know... They say first impressions last. I wanted to make sure I made one on you.” He admitted, grinning and Jaimee couldn’t help it. She laughed at the impish expression on his face, nodding.

“Well I certainly won’t take points off of you for being honest.” She countered, offering him a genuine smile.

Draco had watched this entire exchange with a horrified expression on his face, his eyes turning desperate as he gazed helplessly at his father.

“Father, he can’t do this to me. Again.” He said softly, keeping his voice calm and Lucius only nodded, placing a reassuring hand on his son’s shoulder as they both watched Sirius begin leading Louis to his office, both men engaged in a rather lively discussion about a possible date for a formal meeting.

“He won’t, Draco. We’ll fight.”

Draco nodded firmly, sighing as he promptly shoved the small velvet box he still held in his hand back inside his pocket—wincing slightly as he thought of the beautiful emerald ring he had personally made designed for Harry herself.

Draco watched as Anton smiled and politely offered his hand to escort Jaimee back to her godfather’s study; causing the Gryffindor to laugh and accept it—both teenagers engaged in an animated discussion as they headed down the hall.

At seeing this, Draco shook his head in disappointment before shoving both of his hands in his pockets and allowing his father to lead him to the exit.

I guess I won’t be giving her that ring today after all.

A/N: Aw... :Huggles Draco: I really didn’t want to do that but it had to be done. For the sake of the story at least. :sigh: Anyway, don’t kill me. They WILL spend more time with each other soon. Don’t you all just want to thank me for such a long chapter? Or kill me for being so mean to Draco? Whichever the case—send me your sentiments by expressing it in a lovely review. :hint-hint: Hope you all liked it! Next chapter: Escorts and other debutantes and their suitors. :wink: PLEASE REVIEW!

## Chapter 11 – And the Web is Woven

Dumbledore's eyes twinkled merrily as he looked around the Great Hall, eyeing the vast number of Hogwarts students settling into their respective tables and murmuring amongst themselves.

"Settle down everyone. I believe I have several important announcements to make." He announced jovially as he tapped his wand against his goblet, causing all the students to look at him in avid interest.

"What's this? We all just got back this afternoon and already he has a surprise for us? Wonder what the old bloke wants now... Maybe he's finally going to announce that he's gay or something." Ron whispered to Harry as they took their seats in the Gryffindor table opposite Neville and Seamus, both of which had laughed at his comment.

Harry hid a smile under her hand while Hermione gave them both an admonishing glare, looking irritated. "Dumbledore is not gay, Ronald." She snapped at him, huffing and turning her attention back to the cheerful Headmaster, who was now stroking his long white beard in thought.

"Ignorance is bliss." Harry whispered to Ron as she turned away, both of them smirking at each other in agreement before turning to listen to the Headmaster as well. Dumbledore gestured to Filch at the other end of the room, who nodded his understanding and hastily walked out, causing more murmurs from the students.

"First and foremost, welcome back seventh years. I trust you've all had a productive weekend... Meeting potential spouses... Arranging formalities.... I also trust the girls are all rather excited about the upcoming Debutante ball this week, I hope you've all made final arrangements with your gowns." He commented casually, smiling as most of the girls in the room returned his smile.

Jaimee turned a sour face to Ron, pretending to look sick. "Gag me." She mouthed, causing the redhead to smirk and snigger at her expression.

Dumbledore continued, "As for the gentlemen, I trust you've all started on meeting your potential wives. I think you'll all find that we have a fine selection of young, intelligent and beautiful ladies here in Hogwarts." He added, winking at them while most of the guys in the room either groaned or snorted their amusement.

"Says who? I haven't seen anyone I'm interested in this entire year..." Ron grumbled to Harry, who smiled again, recalling Ron and Hermione's failed relationship the previous year. Although they had ended the relationship on good terms, she knew each still held a sense of bitterness in them that made both reluctant in pursuing any more relationships from then on.

Jaimee patted his hand in mock consolation, rolling her eyes. "You'll always have me, Ronnie-kins." She drawled, smirking when she Ron cringe away in disgust.

"Ew... I'd rather date Eloise Midgen than date a girl I spent seven years seeing in the body of a male." He retorted, causing Harry to snort and Hermione to turn irritably to them again.

"Do you mind? Dumbledore is trying to announce something. I think it's rather important so both of you listen!" She hissed, narrowing her eyes at them as they both gave her sheepish smiles.

Dumbledore continued, however, unaware of their antics. "...in light of this, several bachelors from different and selected schools have decided to join us for a couple of weeks. Not only bachelors, I believe but also some lovely ladies and a handful of older graduate bachelors as well. This was, I believe, a consolidated effort between myself, and numerous other headmasters as well as families as an opportunity to get to know other potential partners outside the confines of ones school." He explained, smiling as he saw their excited squirming and whispering.

Jaimee groaned out loud at that, clutching her hand to her forehead as both Ron and Hermione looked at her in concern.

“What is Harry? Is it your scar? Is it hurting again?” Hermione instantly blurted out, causing Ron to pale considerably as he considered the possibility of Voldemort’s return.

“He’s not back is he? You-Know-Who? He’s not back is he, Harry?” He demanded shrilly, his voice cracking slightly and barely above a whisper but Jaimee looked at him as if he were insane. Rolling her eyes, she gave them both an irritated but pointed glare.

“No, you idiots. I groaned because... Well... Last weekend didn’t really go too well for me in fostering good acquaintances with potential suitors from Beauxbatons and Durmstrang, if you know what I mean...” She responded carefully, inwardly wincing yet proud of herself at the same time.

At that, Ron and Hermione both laughed as they recalled the stories that Sirius had told them upon their arrival that morning. It seems their best friend was quite the man-hater at this point and all of the suitors she had met on Saturday and Sunday had run out of Black Manor in horror.

“What about that Anton guy? He’s a Malfoy, Harry... Do you really like him?” Ron asked curiously, turning to see the slightly red expression on Jaimee’s face.

“Well... He was rather gorgeous...and really charming and all that. But he’s a veela for Merlin’s sake... I don’t know if I should trust that instinct or if it’s merely his allure.” Harry explained, sighing and blowing several strands out of her eyes.

“Whatever... Veela or not, he’s probably better than this Malfoy.” Ron drawled, jerking his thumb in the direction of the Slytherin table where they saw Draco being fawned over by a horde of Slytherin girls, all of which were flirtatiously batting their eyelashes up at him.

Draco seemed oblivious however, and was grumbling to himself moodily before turning to glance at the Headmaster every three minutes. Beside him, Blaise Zabini was chatting casually with another girl that Jaimee didn’t recognize and at the sight of this, she saw Hermione’s eyes narrow slightly in annoyance.



As Jaimee had smirked and was about to make a wry comment about her friend's expression, Neville had sighed wistfully across from them, causing her to glance at him in concern. Seeing the desolate expression on the normally friendly boy's face, Jaimee shot him a concerned look.

"Are you alright, Neville?" She asked him, causing both Ron and Hermione to turn to the boy in question. Neville blushed in embarrassment and nodded hastily, turning away from them so they wouldn't see his glum expression.

"I'll bet he's depressed because he hasn't even gotten the nerve to ask a girl out yet. I'm sure he has a lot of pressure on him... Being the only son of a pureblooded family like his and all." Ron whispered to Harry, who nodded and turned to give the boy a sympathetic look.

Before neither of them had any more time to dwell on the matter, Dumbledore had spoken loudly once more, calling their attention to the front of the room.

"...encourage magical cooperation. As I have been informed, they have just arrived this evening and will be joining us tonight for dinner as we welcome the start of new wonderful friendships here in Hogwarts. Thus, without further ado... Let us welcome our fine guests." Dumbledore finished cheerfully, gesturing to the entrance of the Great Hall.

Harry and the rest of the students turned just in time to see Filch opening the massive doors to reveal a small crowd of elegantly dressed young students and young adults walking gracefully into the room with friendly smiles on their faces directed towards the onlookers.

Beside her, Jaimee heard Ron murmuring his appreciation as they watched a small group of beautiful blondes walk past their table, several of them taking a seat beside Dean Thomas and Ginny Weasley, who glared at them in utter dislike.

Another group, one consisting of rather handsome dark-haired students from Durmstrang smiled at some of the female debutantes before taking a seat beside the Slytherins, causing Jaimee to roll her eyes in annoyance.

"I hope there aren't any more veelas among those Beauxbatons students." Hermione grumbled loudly as she watched a particularly beautiful blonde take a seat across from Blaise Zabini, who smiled cordially at her in response.

"I hope there aren't anymore stupid jerks from Durmstrang here hoping to steal our wome—"

"Hermione Granger... It's been...awhile."

Ron's complaint forgotten, both he and Harry jerked their heads up instantly to meet the hesitant smile of Viktor Krum standing in front of Hermione with an unsure look on his face.

The Bulgarian seeker had obviously grown a couple of inches taller since the last time they had seen him three years ago and both Ron and Harry noted this fact with a slight scowl, watching as the boy had taken Hermione's hand and bent forward, giving it a gentlemanly kiss.

Hermione blushed prettily at this, looking slightly embarrassed as several students from Gryffindor – as well as from the other houses – turned to glance at them in avid curiosity. She inspected Viktor's features earnestly, noting that the seeker had become more handsome as his hair had grown a bit longer and seemed to fall mysteriously into his dark eyes.

A slightly hesitant smile was still on his face as he looked at her, awaiting her response. It suddenly dawned on her that she had yet to react to his greeting and she shook her head at herself, laughing and standing up to pull him into a friendly, familiar hug that did not go unnoticed by a livid, dark-haired boy across the room.

Draco snapped out of his stupor and turned to smirk in avid amusement at Blaise, who was now pointedly ignoring the chatting blonde beside him and was growling and cursing underneath his

breath, his eyes flashing dangerously ahead at the scene that was unfolding in front of them.

“Viktor! I...I can’t believe it! It’s been so long!” Hermione had exclaimed, squealing slightly as the boy had grinned and lifted her slightly off the floor and spun her around playfully in a hug – much to both Harry and Ron’s disgust.

“Yes, I know... I haff been waiting to meet you again. I’m delighted to be here.” He told her, beaming as he set her down and finally turned to smile once again and her two best friends behind her. He noted, with a smirk, that the same young man he had once had to contend with in the TriWizard Tournament three years ago was now the stunningly beautiful brunette glaring pointedly at him with a sneer.

“Potter. How times have...changed you.” He spoke lightly with a chuckle, causing Jaimee to frown further and stand up in irritation, her muscles tensed and her fists tightened into balls of anger.

“Yes... I see time hasn’t changed you, Krum... Still pining for our Hermione here are you?” She retorted flatly, vaguely aware of Ron rising up to stand beside her and the warning look Hermione was desperately trying to shoot them.

“Yeah, Krum.... I thought you were off dating that Italian bombshell we saw in the Quidditch News Pitch a couple of weeks ago.” Ron piped up, backing up his best friend and walking over to Krum, intimidating the Bulgarian with his overwhelming height.

Krum didn’t look amused and turned to give Hermione an apologetic look, which the other girl could only return with one of her own as she knew how incredibly protective her two best friends were of her. She had dated them both at a time – back when Harry had been a boy – and shared a meaningful past with both of them.

Although both had ended unsuccessfully – passion dying out against friendship with Harry and pure incompatibility with Ron – she loved them both as a family. She knew they were only looking out for her safety, especially because of the news that Krum had become quite the playboy according to Quidditch gossip.

“She was hardly a bombshell and you’d do better than to rely on gossip, Weasley. Especially you, Miss Potter.” He mocked, giving Jaimee a wry smile which the girl returned with a dangerous narrowing of her long-lashed eyes.

“Oh come on you three... Why don’t we all settle down and enjoy a nice meal together?” Hermione cajoled nervously, laughing as she watched Jaimee step closer to Krum with her chin raised defiantly up at him, staring up into his face.

“Do you have something to say to me?” She hissed angrily, not at all intimidated by Krum’s advantage in height over her. As a guy, she had been taller than him by a good couple of inches... But now, it frustrated her that he towered over her and made her feel so helpless.

Krum seemed to notice her frustration and smiled simply, looking amused.

“Nothing to you, Potter. I’ve merely come here because I am interested in rekindling my relationship with Hermione... I believe her to be a perfect match for me... Especially as all my previous relationships during my own hunting season ended unsuccessfully.” He explained, causing Hermione’s eyes to widen in surprise and Ron to seethe in anger.

“I fail to see how that concerns you, however... As I fail to see how a woman with the psychological workings of a man seems to be so damn attractive to so many bachelors out there.” He said bluntly, this time causing Harry’s eyes to widen dangerously in anger and Ron to nearly lunge at him if not for the restraining hold Hermione had on his arm.

“Why you—”

Ron never got to finish his sentence however as Jaimee had growled and lunged forward, directing a heavy punch right into Krum’s nose, causing it to break instantly and the tall Bulgarian to stumble to the ground in pain.

“HARRY!”

Jaimee failed to notice Hermione’s scream as she smirked in satisfaction at Krum’s stupefied expression as he stared up at her from the floor in utter bewilderment. The expression on his face spoke of his surprise at her unremarkable strength that was not at all lost during her transformation.

“Miss Potter! I’m ashamed of you! How utterly rude and unladylike and vulgar!” Professor McGonagall had screeched as she rushed forward just as Hermione had stooped to help Viktor back up to his feet. Glancing at the man’s broken and bloody nose, she winced and nodded to Hermione to send him to the hospital wing before glancing at Harry in disdain.

Hermione turned to glare at Jaimee again, who grimaced in response amidst Ron’s hearty laughter before escorting a still stunned Krum to the hospital wing. The boy was obviously still in a state of shock as he still openly stared at Jaimee, unaware the blood dripping from his nose.

“We’ll discuss this later, Harry.” Hermione had hissed under her breath, causing Jaimee to pale in nervousness before she turned to face the tirade of her Head of House and Ron’s avid laughter, pointedly trying to ignore the stares that were now focused on them from all around the Great Hall.

Across the room, Draco had watched the entire scene with a sense of pride, satisfaction and amusement. He had laughed out loud when he watched Jaimee – his girl – pull her arm back and sock Viktor Krum rather painfully on the nose, causing the larger and much taller figure to fall back down instantly in pain.

It had been an effort to protect Granger, he knew that. But he couldn’t help but admire the way Harry was still the same person inside the beautiful girl he saw her to be. Whether or not that meant upstaging or sending to a state of scandal everyone else around her.

Rousing him from his thoughts, Blaise nudged him slightly with a small smirk on his face. “You sure know how to pick your woman,

Malfoy. If Potter wasn't so damn hot, I would think she's rather tomboyish wouldn't you?" He commented, causing the blonde to chuckle in spite of himself.

"In any case... Shouldn't you be thanking her...Zabini?" He asked, turning to return Blaise' look with a smirk of his own. Blaise reddened slightly but laughed and nodded, turning back to watch as Jaimee was led by her ears to the end of the room by Professor McGonagall, where all the other students watched curiously as the Transfiguration professor began a tirade about feminine rules of respect and propriety.

Just as Draco was about to turn back to his food, however, he lurched forward dangerously close to his mash potatoes as he felt someone glomp him from behind, small feminine arms going to wrap rather tightly and affectionately around his midsection.

He winced as he heard the high-pitched, melodious squeal that came after that.

"Coco! I've missed you!"

Draco's left eye twitched slightly as Blaise and the other Slytherins around them turned to look at him in confusion and amusement, echoing the words that had been issued from the person behind them in query.

"Coco??"

Blaise had let out a loud snort of laughter, trying to muffle the sound behind his hand. Draco turned around in his seat cautiously, irritation clearly written on his handsome features as he slowly stood up and beheld the sight before him.

A pale, slender girl in elegant robes of blue had wrapped her arms around his form in a tight, affectionate hug – her face buried into his chest and his chin resting on top of her mane of silver blonde hair. She was currently beaming, and oblivious to the curious stares of the Slytherins watching around them – Pansy Parkinson's irate glare in particular.

“Raine.”

Rolling his eyes, he disentangled himself from the girl's arms and held her at arm's length from him, looking into her beautiful features, stunning smile and sparkling blue eyes. She was only slightly shorter than Draco; and was so exceptionally beautiful that even Blaise couldn't help stare at her in awe.

“I thought I told you never to call me by that blasphemous name.” He snapped at her, his eyes flashing dangerously as the girl only laughed and lightly tapped him on the cheek, looking amused.

“Aw, but it's such a cute and affectionate name, Coco. Personally, I think it suits you.” She teased, leaning over and planting a kiss on the Slytherin's cheek.

“And why do you look so unhappy to see me? You should be thankful I'm here... We haven't seen each other in such a long time and this is how to greet me.” She huffed, crossing her arms over her chest and flipping her perfectly styled hair over her shoulder.

She pointedly ignored all the male attention she was strangely receiving from time to time as though there was a magnetic switch currently being turned on and off every couple of seconds around her – something Blaise had noticed.

“Oy. Malfoy – is this your long lost girlfriend or something?” Theodore Nott asked bluntly as they all gathered around Draco and the girl, watching as Draco's eyes widened in alarm at the question.

“N—no! Of course not! You see – She's – “

“Ugh. God, he could only wish to ever date a girl like me.” Raine had retorted, rolling her eyes and laughing slightly at the idea as she turned around and flashed them all a charming smile – once again causing the circle of Slytherin males around her to shudder in desire.

“She’s a half-veela.” Blaise spoke loudly, causing Draco to smirk in amusement and all of their other Slytherin male friends to blink themselves out of their stupor and stare at him in confusion.

Raine seemed to brighten up at that, walking over to Blaise and affectionately ruffling his hair, causing the other boy to growl and shove her hand away.

“I’m so glad you remember me, Blaise. And here I thought you didn’t recognize who I was.” She mused before bending over and giving the other boy a hug as well.

“Who are you, anyway?” Pansy finally asked rather rudely, walking right up to her and sizing her up and down in obvious dislike.

She beamed at that, walking right back into the middle of the circle of people where Draco stood and throwing an arm over his shoulders before turning to smile charmingly at everyone once more.

“Allow me to introduce myself properly then... My name is Lorraine Catherine Levinsour Malfoy... but my cousin Draco here always calls me Raine for short.” She finished, winking at Draco who promptly chose to roll his eyes in disgust once more.

“Cousin?” Pansy’s jaw had dropped, her face coloring slightly in embarrassment at having accosted her beloved’s cousin so rudely.

Draco recoiled slightly, oblivious to the murmurs around them as Raine sat herself down beside him on the table and began introducing herself to his friends.

She turned to Malcolm, holding out a hand for him to take and kiss.

“It’s a pleasure to meet all of Coco’s friends. He’s my closest cousin by the way... And he’s told me so much about Slytherin.” She drawled as Malcolm had bent forward and dropped a kiss onto her hand, his pupils slightly dilated from her veela allure.



“Lorraine, would you stop the veela allure already? It’s getting on my nerves. Besides... Why aren’t you affected by it, Drac?” Blaise asked irritably, shaking his head to clear the attraction away.

Draco snorted, rolling his eyes at his best friend’s ignorance.

“Haven’t you read up on Veela, you dimwit? Veela allure won’t affect the Veela’s relatives or family members. Otherwise, that’ll be really problematic wouldn’t it?” He pointed out, laughing slightly.

At that, Lorraine smirked and finally nodded, looking slightly put out.

“Fine... But I was only doing it because I know this house is filled with arrogant, preppy jerks. You know how I like to string jerks around.” She explained, sighing just as Draco sat beside her and turned to look at her with a grim expression.

“If you’re here, that can only mean one thing...” His voice trailed off and he turned to glance around the Great Hall suspiciously, his eyes narrowing in agitation.

Hearing this, Lorraine’s eyes dimmed slightly and she bit her lip, nodding her assent.

“Yes... Anton will be arriving as well. He’ll be coming a little later on... He had some arrangements to settle but otherwise, going to Hogwarts for this hunting season was his idea. That’s why I’m here...” She explained to him and Draco didn’t seem to like this as he growled under his breath.

“That bastard... What the bloody hell does he think he’s doing now, intruding in my personal life again...?” He muttered darkly so that only Raine and Blaise could hear.

Blaise shot a confused look at Lorraine, his eyes quizzical.

“Wait.... I don’t understand. Why are you guys here, then? Haven’t you finished with your own debut, Raine?” He asked and Raine shook her head, looking slightly excited.

“Nope. We’re both home schooled, remember? So I get to choose the school I can debut with for the hunting season this year... Anton had specifically suggested I debut here, in Hogwarts. In his words, it was so we could hang out with cousin Draco.” She told him and Draco’s eyes flashed angrily at that, his hands clenching into fists.

“By the way... Yesterday, he and father were both going on about how they had found the perfect match for him this season... That was why he had canceled his engagement with Elisa this morning.” She told them, failing to notice how Draco’s jaw had clenched at the mention of Elisa’s name.

“Elisa... The poor girl... She was crushed. But personally, I never really liked her anyway. She was such a money-grabbing slut. So... Do you know the girl Anton likes, Draco? Father said she was from Hogwarts.” She asked curiously, turning to look at Draco with an inquisitive glance.

Blaise stiffened slightly and watched as Draco clenched his jaw in anger, his silver eyes darkening to an angry shade of dark, stormy gray.

“I think I may have an idea who.”

Neville Longbottom sighed miserably as he looked up from his plate and watched Luna Lovegood converse with several male students from Beauxbatons, the blonde’s expression its usual dreamy, faraway look as she told them about how her earrings were to protect her from the sugar pixies.

The students, although looking slightly uncertain as to how they were to respond to this piece of information, were all smiling at her lovely features – something that Luna evidently failed to notice as Neville watched them from where he sat at the end of the Gryffindor table.

“It’s hopeless... Like she’d give me the time of day anyway.” He thought out loud to himself before sighing again and burying his face into his hands. He flinched away immediately, cursing himself as he had managed to smear some of his gravy onto his face.

Nice going, Mr. Klutz. He thought to himself, shaking his head at his foolishness before wiping his face with a table napkin.

“Like who’d give you the time of day?”

Neville gasped in alarm as Jaimee plopped herself in front of her and began heaping large, unwomanly amounts of mash potatoes and vegetables onto her plate. She turned to give him an expectant look as she grabbed a nearby piece of bread and bit into it, chewing noisily on it as she waited for his answer.

“H-Harry... Uhm... Nobody. I didn’t mean anybody... You must have heard wrong.” He stammered, trying to hide the blush that was spreading onto his face but Jaimee didn’t look convinced as she stared at the expression on his face.

After a long moment of staring at him and Neville fidgeting uncomfortably under the beautiful girl’s stare, Jaimee’s eyes finally widened and she slapped her palm against the table in exclamation, causing both Seamus and Dean to look at them curiously.

Neville groaned rather loudly at this and covered his face with his hands again, hiding his blush of embarrassment and in an effort to prevent Harry from discovering anymore of his secrets or teasing her further with her jibes.

“Aha! I knew it! You like someone, don’t you Neville? Well come on, don’t keep me in the suspense. Who are you aiming for? She hot?” She burst out, grinning knowingly. She took a long gulp of her orange juice, slammed the now empty goblet loudly onto the table before turning around and looking around the Great Hall excitedly.

“Harry, don’t shout.” He whispered pleadingly at her, shaking his head frantically but the boy-turned-girl seemed to have heard none of his words as she grabbed a chicken leg from a nearby plate, shoved it into her mouth and started chewing on it as she surveyed the Hall.

“Well?! Go on! Tell me who she is, perhaps I can give you some advice or something!” She encouraged further, her words slurred

slightly from the food in her mouth as she was still munching on the chicken leg that was hanging from her teeth.

Neville winced again, both at her curiosity and her absolute lack of feminine manners. It wasn't everyday he saw a debutante with such eating habits but then again, Jaimee wasn't an ordinary debutante to begin with.

With this thought, he couldn't help chuckling to himself and relaxing a bit as he sighed and nodded, letting his eyes wander back to where Luna was now gingerly raising a fork of her chicken to her gloss-covered lips.

Seeing the expression in his eyes glaze over in admiration, Jaimee simply followed his gaze to Luna , her eyes widening in surprise and amusement as she saw who the object of his affections were.

"Luna Lovegood, huh? Well, aren't you sweet, Neville? You and Lovegood hung out a lot in the past couple of years... Especially back in DA. I think you two would look really good together." She nodded, chuckling before going back to her food.

"Which reminds me... Where's Ron? I thought he would have been eating all the food by now." She commented, gesturing to Ron's vacated seat.

Neville shrugged, obviously uninterested. "I think I remember him saying something about following Hermione to make sure she was alright with Viktor Krum. Harry... You really think I have a chance with Luna?"

The question had caught her off guard and she turned from dissecting her chicken to glance carefully at him, noticing the sincere feelings he had for the other girl evident in his solemn features. After a few moments, she smiled at him, nodding her head.

"I think she'd have to be crazy not to realize how much you'd make a great guy for her." She answered truthfully before she reached over and gave Neville a playful punch on the shoulder, causing the boy to wince slightly in pain and clutch the offended limb.

“Merlin, you honestly don’t know your own strength, Jaimee. Don’t just go around punching boys.” He kidded, no doubt referring to her little incident awhile ago and with that Jaimee seemed to redden slightly in embarrassment, glancing at her fist.

“I guess I don’t know my own strength. Ehehe.” She commented, shrugging before she turned to wolf down her food again, occasionally watching Neville as he shot Luna several looks of longing from where he sat.

Merlin, he’s got it bad... Jaimee thought, shaking her head in amusement when Neville sighed again and began picking at his plate of food, shoving the pieces of vegetables around with no obvious intention of putting them into his mouth.

“Harry?”

Jaimee looked up, a half-eaten piece of carrot stuck in her mouth and gave him an expectant look, her eyebrows raised up in query.

He laughed at the expression on her face but gave her a genuinely thankful smile, nodding his head in acknowledgment.

“Thanks for the encouragement though... Truthfully, it’s all I need right now. This hunting season will be my hell...” He said softly, taking a deep breath before continuing. “My grandmother expects me to find my potential match by finals week... She says she doesn’t really care if she’s pureblood or not, we’ve long outgrown that tradition years ago. Just...someone who makes me happy.” He explained further, turning to glance at Luna once more.

This time, Jaimee followed his gaze again with a small smile, wiping her mouth with her table napkin as she had listened to his explanation.

“Why don’t you ask her out then?”

Neville turned to look at her as though she had sprouted a new head.

“Are you insane? I can’t ask her out! She’s thought of me as nothing more than a friend for two years! Asking her out now will make things weird between us... Plus it’ll ruin our friendship!” He hissed at her but Jaimee rolled eyes and promptly hopped over the table to sit beside him, causing Parvati and Lavender to narrow their eyes at the completely masculine maneuver.

Jaimee slung an arm over his shoulders and gestured to Luna, nudging Neville to follow her gaze.

“Look... The debutante ball is coming up soon... If you’re lucky, Lovegood probably doesn’t have an escort yet. So why don’t you ask to accompany her? You’re both...friends...after all right? It wouldn’t seem weird to her yet. It’ll be a great chance for you to lay some groundwork.” She nudged him again, this time winking at him mischievously and Neville couldn’t help laughing at her antics.

“She... already has a date. Hermione told me awhile ago that her father had arranged for her to be escorted by a family friend... Apparently, the guy is a childhood friend of hers so Luna agreed. That basically means any chance of spending time with her during the ball were slim to none.” He muttered desolately, sighing again.

He was about to drop his head into his hands to sulk and Jaimee seemed to roll her eyes and punch him very painfully on the arm, causing him to wince and look up at her in confusion.

“What was that for? That hurt!”

“For not being a man, that’s what! Honestly, Longbottom... Sometimes I wonder why they even put you in Gryffindor!” She snapped, shooting him with a piercing glare that made him recoil in fear.

“Wh-what?”

“You heard me!” Jaimee’s eyes were flashing indignantly as she stood up from her seat and raised one foot up onto the bench, leaning down so that she was staring Neville right into the face.

Neville couldn't help it – he blushed under her scrutiny. It was one thing to have Harry Potter glare at you, that alone was scary enough. It was another when he had taken the form of this incredibly attractive girl and she was staring you down through her long, flirty lashes and elegantly composed features.

“If you like her so damn much, why don't you fight for her then?! Is it any different than from the courage you showed me from when you fought beside me against Voldemort?! It's the same thing, only this time your opponent is your bloody fear! Are you a Lion or not?!” She raged again, her facial expression briefly reminding Neville of how Harry had looked while dueling Voldemort.

Neville cowered from her expression but nodded frantically, wanting to do anything that would stop her from intimidating him like that.

Merlin, is she scary... I pity the man who has to marry Harry Potter one day. He thought to himself, shuddering as Jaimee seemed to calm down and accept his answer. She nodded her approval before sitting back down onto her seat, dimly remembering to primly cross her legs.

“A year ago... I was the same as you towards women, Neville. I was cowardly... I couldn't muster up the courage to talk a woman in the eye and ask her out. But then... I realized that I didn't want to live my life with any regret... And so, I gained courage and asked women out. I gained a lot of experience in relationships after that... I know exactly how to get their attention.” She boasted slightly, grinning to herself as she remembered how she had been as a male.

Neville rolled his eyes, obviously unimpressed.

“What good will that do you now? You're a woman too.” He told her bluntly and winced, expecting another outburst but Jaimee didn't seem to take the bait.

“Yes... I am. Biologically, I am female. But I'm still the same person inside. The only reason I agreed to this entire debutante thing without a fight was for the same reason I said awhile ago... I don't want to live my life with any regrets. So I might as well see how this new life

will turn out..." She explained softly, her voice trailing off as she let her eyes wander around the room.

Neville had opened his mouth to respond but before he could utter a word, she had snapped her attention back to him again, causing him to close his mouth shut with a snap.

"But yes, those experiences will not be of any use to me now, Neville. You're right about that... However, they will be beneficial to you." She finished triumphantly, turning to give him an all-knowing smile.

Neville's eyes widened slightly at that as he eyed her suspiciously, unsure of what was going on in the past war-hero's – heroine's – head. She smiled sweetly and scooted closer to him, throwing an arm over his shoulders again.

"Longbottom... I believe I do not have an escort yet to the debutante ball this week. Will you do me the honor of being my escort?" She asked sweetly, batting her eyelashes at him in such an exaggeratingly feminine way that Neville had cringed in disgust.

"Ugh... You don't have to overdo the eyelash thing, Harry. Women don't do that..." He teased, causing the Gryffindor girl to growl and hit him upside the head with her arm.

He laughed however and nodded his agreement, looking at her with both immense gratitude and uncertainty. "I would love to escort you to the debutante ball, Harry... Although are you sure you want to go with me? I'm a... terrible dancer, you know. And besides... I'm sure dozens of guys here would kill to be your escort... Why me?" He asked, looking embarrassed.

But Jaimee just smiled mischievously again, reaching over and turning his head so that they were both facing the Ravenclaw table again. They watched as Luna got up and began walking out of the hall in a slight skip, her earrings bouncing with every jump.

"Because... I've got a plan to help you out, Neville. I'm going to teach you exactly how to catch your beloved's attention... And by the debutante ball, believe me... You will have with you the Harry Potter



charm and you can get any girl you wanted.” She promised, smiling smugly to herself as she ran through her head the list of things she needed to teach Neville about courtship.

Neville looked dumbstruck and frantically shook his head, looking nervous.

“N-no, Harry! That’s alright, you don’t have to—”

“It’s the least I can do now... I used to gather knowledge about that from experience. Now all that knowledge is going to go to waste with just me anyway.... Seeing that I can’t use it anymore as a woman.” She told him, shrugging.

Neville still didn’t look convinced and was biting his lip, giving her a dubious look.

She laughed and waved his suspicions away, flashing him a smile of reassurance.

“Don’t worry, Longbottom. I’m not like Malfoy or anything, I won’t teach you sleaze or anything like that. I’ll just teach you... what women really appreciate. Like genuine charm and how to compliment her. Also... How you should... present yourself.” She told him, looking disapprovingly at his messy, unkempt robes and mud-stained shoes.

Neville blushed in embarrassment but Jaimee laughed again, giving him another smile which this time, Neville finally returned.

“Alright then... I shall let you teach me the Harry Potter charm. Do you...think Luna will notice me by the debutante ball?” He asked her, a hopeful twinkle in his eyes.

Jaimee rolled her eyes and began digging into her food again.

“Longbottom... You’re escorting me. Of course she’ll notice you. By the debutante ball... We’ll have you looking good... and charming your way easily through the debutantes like a breeze.”

Oooh... Just wait till I get my hands on him – her. Hermione mentally corrected herself, fuming as she stalked her way through the corridors back towards the Great Hall, wanting nothing more than to wring Jaimee's neck.

I can't believe she punched Viktor just like that! And he wasn't even doing anything! Well sure he was taunting her a bit but did she really have to punch him in the nose?! She thought further, feeling even more angry as she rounded a corner.

She gasped, however, when she collided with a rather solid wall in front of her, causing her to stop dead in her tracks and press her palms against the wall to steady herself. It was then she realized, however, that the wall she was pressed up against was not a wall but was, in fact, a rather solid and warm chest and she blushed, looking up slowly right into the handsome, smirking face of –

“Blaise Zabini.”

She had spoken his name rather coldly as she glared up into his dark eyes, watching as the orbs seemed to twinkle in amusement and travel downwards to eye the two palms she still had pressed against his chest.

“Ehem. Granger.” He spoke teasingly, raising an eyebrow at their position and Hermione instantly pulled her hands away as though he had caught on fire. She felt her cheeks flame up in embarrassment and she coughed, crossing her arms over her chest.

“What are you doing here? Can't you see I was walking?!” She snapped irritably at him, narrowing her eyes at his haughty expression as he raised an eyebrow at her question.

“I was simply making my way back towards my common room, Granger. Is that a crime? Shouldn't I be scolding you for harassing me so openly the way you just did?” He retorted playfully, immediately causing Hermione to blush darker and glare at him with daggers in her eyes.

"I was not harassing you, Zabini! Besides, it's not like that matters anyway... You're such a big playboy that random women touching your chest shouldn't even matter to you anymore." She bit back, shooting the handsome Slytherin a sneer of her own.

Blaise mocked the action of having an arrow shot through his heart, smirking at the highly irritated expression on the Gryffindor's face.

"Why so irritable at that, Granger? Are you perhaps jealous that I should – as you say – be used to having girls caress my chest?" He drawled, the flirtatious tone in his voice unmistakable as it caused another hot blush to spread across Hermione's face. This time, however, it wasn't because of anger.

"Wha-what are you –" She stammered weakly as she took a step back from him, suddenly feeling the need for a glass of cold water. She took another step backwards as Blaise bent down to inspect her features carefully, a small smile tugging on his lips.

"Why are you so embarrassed? Did I say something wrong?" He asked gingerly, still peering closely into her face that Hermione winced and flinched away, frantically shaking her head.

"N-nothing. I—I better get back to the Great Hall... I'm sure Ron or Jaimee is looking for me. Uhm. See you around, Zabini." She stammered, making to walk past him but she gasped in surprise when the Slytherin had clasped his hand around her wrist and had yanked her backwards towards him.

She could only blink as Blaise shoved her against the wall and placed both of his hands above her head, trapping her between the wall and his looming form. Eyes wide with surprise, she looked up at him to see him smiling slightly, his eyes twinkling mischievously.

"Stay a while longer and talk to me. We hardly get any chance to talk to each other outside of Potions class... And even then, the stuff we talk about is Potions. Why don't we have a real conversation for a change?" He commented, still leaning against the wall and making Hermione's heart beat rapidly in her chest.

“Uhm... What did you have in mind?” She asked nervously, watching as Blaise released one of his hands to run it through his dark hair in thought.

“Oh.... I don’t know. Like tell me... How’s the debutante thing going along? Do you have an escort yet?” He asked casually, smiling before placing his hand back on the wall again as he awaited her response.

At that, Hermione’s heart leaped painfully into her throat and she forced out a nervous laugh before answering.

“Ah...Well you see, that’s—”

“Hermione! You! Stupid Slytherin git, get your hands off of her!”

She winced to herself, cursing inwardly as she heard Ron’s footsteps nearing them, the Gryffindor shoving Blaise off of her and helping her stand up properly.

Blaise didn’t seem to appreciate being interrupted and he glared at Ron with fury clearly written in his eyes, his fists clenched tightly.

“We were talking, Weasley. Didn’t anyone ever teach you any manners?” He drawled calmly, taking one step forward towards Ron and seizing the other boy up in challenge.

Ron sneered back and promptly pushed Hermione back behind him protectively, his hand looming warningly over the pocket of his robes that held his wand.

“Well didn’t anyone ever teach you not to accost a girl in the hallway like that, Zabini? I could have you reported for sexual harassment you know.” He retorted, this time causing Blaise to blink in surprise and then laugh halfheartedly in amusement.

Hermione wished right then and there that the floor could open up and swallow her whole. Or perhaps just swallow Ron. She thought to herself in anger, shaking her head.

“Weasley, I hardly think what I did qualifies as sexual harassment... And besides, it can't be harassment if there was no reluctance involved from either parties.” He pointed out, turning to Hermione and giving her a saucy wink.

Hermione blushed at his and looked away at Ron's questioning gaze, obviously wanting to avoid the question being asked in his eyes.

Blaise smirked and was about to comment on it further when he heard a rather high-pitched squeal behind him, causing him to whirl around and grimace in dismay when he saw Mandy Brocklehurst making her way toward him with a flirtatious smile etched onto her elegant features.

“Blaise-Pooh. I've been looking for you everywhere...I can't believe you've been here all this time.” She spoke softly in her sultry voice, oblivious to the glare of dislike Hermione was shooting at her from behind Ron's curious glance.

“Well you found me, Brocklehurst. Was there something you wanted?” He asked bluntly, turning to glance briefly at Hermione but he sighed when he saw that the girl was glaring at him in disgust, shaking her head in disbelief.

Mandy smirked at him, walking forward until she was just inches away from his face – causing Blaise to stiffen slightly in alarm.

“You, honey. I wanted you...Particularly, I wanted you to be my escort for the debutante ball... Will you do me the honor...?” She asked sweetly, batting her eyelashes prettily at him.

Blaise raised an eyebrow and was about to decline her offer when Hermione had finally spoke up in righteous anger, shoving Ron out of the way and walking up to the scene in an outrage.

“That's right, Zabini. As I was saying... yes, I have got an escort already for the debutante ball. I'm going with Viktor Krum... He just offered a couple of minutes ago. I see you have a date as well so I'm pretty sure that's just about enough conversation for the both of us for now.” She drawled loudly and mockingly, pointedly ignoring the

gasping noises Ron was making behind her at the mention of Viktor Krum.

At this, Blaise's eyes had narrowed angrily and his lips curled into a derisive sneer as he watched Hermione flip her hair and stalk off, leaving Ron staring after her in disbelief and confusion as to what exactly he had witnessed.

Mandy seemed unfazed and unaware of what Hermione had implied and was still staring rather expectantly at him, awaiting his response. With a soft sigh, Blaise turned to look at Ron, who was now staring at him in anger.

"Tell Granger I'd like to apologize. And that if she'd let me, I'd like to have one of her dances during the debutante ball." He told him and Ron merely glared at him in response before sneering and walking off towards the Gryffindor Common Room, ignoring his request.

Blaise shook his head again and turned back to look at Mandy, who was now tapping her foot impatiently.

"Well?!" She snapped, raising a perfectly plucked eyebrow and Blaise fought the urge to roll his eyes, nodding his assent.

"Very well... I'll be your escort, Mandy."

"Of course you will." She smirked, planting a kiss on his cheek before walking off towards her own common room, leaving Blaise alone to his thoughts.

He was just about to head out to his own dormitory when he promptly heard a familiar shout behind him, causing him to turn around and chuckle at the scene that was unfolding behind him.

He laughed as Draco raced through the corridors with Pansy right at his heels, a panicked expression on his face as he shoved past Blaise and headed towards the nearest turn, shoving past more students along the way.

“NO, PANSY! I will NOT be your bloody escort to the ball! Now stop chasing me!”

A/N: Nothing much happened here between our two favorite characters but don't worry, you'll be seeing them in the next chapter – which I've uploaded too! Yay! Haha. Please don't forget to leave me a review! ANYTHING you'd like to say...As I keep saying, the more reviews and thoughts I get from my readers, the more ideas I get to write for this story. So please help me out! :mwah!:

## Chapter 12 – Clowns and Idiots

“I can’t believe Hermione... Viktor Krum?! After all the stuff we warned her about the jerk, she still wouldn’t listen.” Ron grumbled out loud to himself as he made his way towards the Owlery, wrapping his Gryffindor scarf tighter around himself as he shivered.

As he had headed towards the Gryffindor tower, he had remembered the letter he had finished to send to his parents and had taken a detour towards the Owlery instead, running into Dean and Seamus inside as he sent Pig off with his letter.

The two had been tailing after two beautiful brunettes from Beauxbatons and he had rolled his eyes at them, knowing that the girls from Beauxbatons were particular about their matches being pureblooded and that neither of them had a chance.

I might... If I wasn’t so bloody bad with women. He thought to himself, grumbling again as he made his way down the stairs back towards Hogwarts, shivering again as he felt the cold wind against his pale skin.

When I get to the common room... I’m going to make myself a cup of nice, warm cocoa. He thought, already warming to the thought as he stepped into the narrow Hogwarts corridor and started walking back towards Gryffindor tower through the snow-covered walkway.

It was a little past eight and some students were already seen milling out of the Great Hall to walk back to their dormitories, chattering lively about the upcoming events of the week. He dodged irritably as a couple of first year Hufflepuffs raced past him, giggling something about Quidditch and he couldn’t help but roll their eyes at their naiveté.

He let out a sharp exhale before turning a corridor to walk up a rather long flight of stairs. He froze, however, when he heard a loud-pitched cry of panic and looked up just in time to see a blue-robed figure falling dangerously a couple of steps above him, immediately causing him to surge forward and break the figure’s fall with his own body—sending the both of them crashing to the ground.



“Ow... Bloody hell, why don’t you watch where you’re going...?” Ron grumbled out loud in annoyance as he sought to disentangle himself from the figure lying on top of him, clutching painfully at the back of his head.

“I’m so sorry...”

He looked up at the sultry voice and froze once more, his eyes instantly going wide as he beheld the sight of the beautiful blonde staring at him with an apologetic smile, her dazzling blue eyes sparkling in both curiosity and amusement as she took in his bedazzled expression.

Ron gaped openly at her, briefly aware of all the blood rushing into his face in a hot, embarrassed blush as he noticed their compromising position on the floor.

She’s...gorgeous. He thought silently to himself, his eyes roaming over her exquisite features – from the sleek blonde hair falling into elegant curls just past her shoulders, the long graceful lashes adorning the round blue eyes which were covered slightly by several wisps of hair, to the sweet smile gracing her luscious pink lips.

She was...

“Beautiful...” He whispered out loud, immediately causing the girl’s eyes to widen slightly in surprise as she stared at him, blinking to make sure she had heard him correctly.

“Excuse me...?” She asked, a playful smile tugging on her lips as Ron instantly blinked and shook his head hastily, blushing darker as he realized he had voiced his thoughts out loud.

“N-nothing! I—I’m sorry... How rude of me... L—Let me help you up.” He stammered, bolting up into a standing position and helping the slender girl to her feet, briefly noting the long white legs underneath the hem of her skirt and the slender curve of her waist as he helped her up.

She smiled warmly at him again, dusting off the dirt from her robes before stepping backwards slightly and raising a hand up for him to take.

“I’m Lorraine... It’s a pleasure to meet you.” She spoke softly, raising her eyebrows expectantly when Ron – unsure of what to do—instead of kissing her hand, had grabbed it and given it a firm shake, causing the girl to giggle slightly in amusement.

“Ronald Weasley... I’m a student here at Hogwarts. Gryffindor. Pleasure is all mine.” He responded, managing a weak smile as he took in all her features; noting to himself how her laugh was the most melodious thing he had probably ever heard in his life.

She nodded and gestured up to the flight of stairs she had fallen from behind them, looking slightly sheepish.

“I’m...sorry. I was making my way to the guest rooms when I suddenly got myself lost...I wasn’t really aware that Hogwarts staircases moved around here so I ended up here. In any case, thank you for breaking my fall.” She said, blushing slightly under his scrutinizing stare and Ron grinned at her, waving her embarrassment away.

“It was nothing... I’m pretty much the punching bag of women anyway. If they’re not punching or slapping me away as rejection, the only time they’d fall on top of me is when they come falling down the stairs.” He kidded, causing Lorraine’s eyes to widen slightly in surprise before she blinked and started laughing at his antics.

“Is...that so?” She commented, her blue eyes roaming over him curiously as Ron laughed and gestured to a nearby corridor, blushing slightly under her inspection.

“Well... If you’d let me – without punching me or anything – I’d like to guide you to the guest rooms just to make sure you don’t get lost again or anything. Is that alright?” He offered, his voice sounding slightly squeaky to him in nervousness but Lorraine seemed to find this amusing and nodded cheerfully, offering her arm.

Ron wasn't sure of how to go about this and instead, nodded and linked his arm through hers, causing the blonde girl to burst out laughing again and pull her arm away, shaking her head hastily.

"No, no, no... You're such a funny guy, Ronald. You're supposed to let me link my arm through yours. Or at least grab my hand to escort me... It's how things are done in my country. I gather you're not familiar with these customs?" She teased lightly and Ron managed a nervous laugh in spite of himself, ducking his head sheepishly as they both began walking.

"Please... Call me Ron...And no, not really. I usually make a fool out of myself in front of really pretty girls like you so—" He stopped abruptly as he managed to crash himself violently into a heavy suit of armor, causing the suit to come crashing down onto him, pinning him to the ground.

Lorraine was giggling again and helping him to stand up as he blushed furiously, angry at himself for acting so stupid in front of her and for not watching where he was going. He was almost sure that any chances he had impressing her at all were now ruined. She probably thought of him as a clown.

"A-Are you alright?" She asked, still giggling as she helped him to his feet, noting the adorable blush that was etched onto his face.

She couldn't help it.... He intrigued her immensely. It wasn't everyday that boys made fools out of themselves in front of her without her turning on her veela charm... And she found that his genuine tendency to make a fool out of himself was quite endearing...In a strange way.

"Y-yeah... I'm sorry. I'm quite making a clown out of myself aren't I?" He asked bluntly, his voice sounding irritated and his eyes downcast as they continued their way towards the guest rooms.

Lorraine smiled at this and stopped, waiting until he stopped as well and turned around to face her in question.

“Yes... You are. But a very adorable clown.” She assured him, walking over to him and flashing him a small smile.

Ron had to return the smile she gave him, feeling a kind of warmth envelop him they walked in comfortable silence, both teenagers curiously thinking of the other in wonder.

They stopped when they reached a rather large door indicating the guest rooms and with that, Ron nodded at her, smiling briefly once more turning to leave. He stopped however, when he heard her call his name softly and he turned around, giving her an expectant look.

She bit her lip uncertainly before stepping up to him, the expression on her face unreadable.

“I...Thank you, Ron.” She whispered genuinely, the corner of her lips quirking into a slight grin and he laughed at that, nodding his assent.

“Don’t mention it... Now you can get back to mingling the more acceptable males of this school. Honestly, I’ve made such a fool out of myself tonight that I won’t even consider myself one in front of you.” He kidded lightly – and nervously – once more and she chuckled at his, rolling her eyes.

“You’re...a funny guy, Ron. And I kind of like it...You’re the first guy I’ve ever met that wasn’t trying to impress me... Or spending the entire time praising himself. It’s refreshing, actually.” She admitted to him, shaking her head in amusement at herself.

Ron’s nervous expression softened slightly at hearing this but again, unsure of how to respond, he merely coughed to himself and looked away to hide his blushing face – something that made Lorraine smirk fondly at him yet again.

“Well I’m sure a lot of guys other than me are falling over themselves for such a beautiful girl such like you.” He responded easily and at that, Lorraine grinned her agreement, merely nodding to his compliment.

“Perhaps... But none of them did it quite as adorably...embarrassingly...or as genuinely as you did.” She answered truthfully and Ron felt his stomach lurch excitedly at hearing this, coughing again and shoving his hands into his pockets.

“Well you know what they say... The man who smiles when things go wrong has thought of someone to blame it on.” He muttered under his breath and it was only when he realized the stupidity of what he said that his eyes shot up in alarm only to see Lorraine giggling again at his words , clutching onto her sides.

He cursed under his breath at how he had managed to embarrass himself again, burying his face into his hands until Lorraine’s giggles died away, leaving her to stare at him with a rather warm smile on her face.

I could make a career out of embarrassing myself in front of women. He thought angrily to himself, sighing and raking a hand through his red hair.

“Well...Er... I better go.” He mumbled to himself.

“Thank you for bringing me back. I don’t know how I would have found my way back here without you.” She thanked him earnestly, another smile tugging at her lips but Ron found the expression endearing on her and smiled back – although a bit goofily .

He was just about to turn around to walk back to the Gryffindor dormitories when he heard a rather angry shout ahead of them and whirled around again just in time to see Draco Malfoy rushing over to them with an irate expression on his face.

“Raine, where the hell have you been? I’ve been looking for you everywhere! I thought you had gotten lost or something and now I see you chumming around with this...Weasley?!” He had spat out his last name like a curse and Ron felt his fists clench angrily, his eyes narrowing at the blonde’s sneer.

“What do you care if she talks to me or not, Malfoy?” He retorted but as soon as the words had left his lips, he felt like a complete idiot as he suddenly pieced everything together.

He noticed how both Draco’s and Lorraine’s hair were of the same striking color – a rather rare shade actually considering only the Malfoy family was known to have that shade of silver blonde. He took in the similarity of features – the perfectly chiseled nose, the aristocratic eyebrows, and the same pale complexion – Ron’s eyes widened.

Holy shit.

Draco seemed to notice his horror and sneered, gesturing to the now uneasily shifting girl beside him. “Weasley, it seems you already met my younger cousin Lorraine Levinsour Malfoy. She’s here for the debutante ball... As well to be matched to a highly respectable wizard of my approval.” He drawled carefully, his eyes narrowing as he took in Ron’s embarrassed expression and Lorraine’s discomfort.

“Y—you’re a Malfoy...?” Was all he managed to gasp out and at that, Lorraine raised an eyebrow in confusion, nodding her head.

“Of course I am... But I thought you knew! I thought you’d be like a friend of Draco’s or something.” She told him, biting her lip and at that, both Ron and Draco laughed harshly, shaking their heads.

“We’re hardly what you may consider friends...” Ron snapped mockingly, his fists still clenching in anger as Draco rolled his eyes and gestured to Lorraine again, an amused expression on his face.

“I hope you also gathered that she’s a half-veela and she’d rather eat glass than to ever give a loser like you the time of day... right, Raine?” Draco prodded, nudging her but Lorraine gave a sharp tutting sound and elbowed him sharply back, looking angry.

“He didn’t have to know that, Draco! It’s not like I was using the veela charm on him or anything!” She snapped back and looked at Ron again but the Gryffindor boy was now shaking his head at his

stupidity and was retreating quietly, not wanting to engage Malfoy into a fight.

Draco's jaw opened and closed slightly at that and didn't react when Lorraine had pushed past him and rushed forward to stop Ron from leaving, looking slightly apologetic.

"I'm sorry for Draco, here... I realize he's being a jerk but he's just looking out for me. And I am sorry that you think I may have misled you or anything, that really wasn't my intention. I want to tell you that I truly did enjoy your company." She told him, offering him a small disarming smile but Ron met her smile with a cold glare, his eyes narrowing as he yanked his arm away from her.

"Nice try, Malfoy. Now I know exactly why I was acting so idiotic awhile ago. You were only lugging me around with your convenient little veela charm. How pathetic. You and your family are all the same." He spat out, sneering and at the tone of his voice, Lorraine pulled back, stung.

Then, almost as fast as Ron had seen the slightly offended expression on her face and in its place was a haughty sneer so similar to Draco's that Ron had stepped back slightly in mild surprise. He couldn't believe he hadn't noticed her features before.

"For your information...Weasley...I never used the veela charm on you once the entire time we were talking. I believe it unnecessary to ever use that charm for my relationships... So feel free to realize that you were acting like a complete moron on your own. I don't think any veela charm would ever justify how much you're innately an idiot all by yourself." She mocked, causing Draco to snigger behind them and Ron's face to darken ominously.

Without another word, he gave her a sneer in acknowledgement and turned around, stalking back to Gryffindor towers in silence and unaware of the look of regret that had passed over Lorraine's features as she watched him walk away.

Draco walked up to her and tapped her lightly on the shoulder, raising a curious eyebrow. "What was that all about? Why were you with him

anyway?" He demanded and Lorraine rolled her eyes, pushing past him again and making her way back into the guest rooms.

"That's really none of your concern, Draco. He was only showing me around the school. You didn't have to act like such a jerk about it." She snapped at him, sighing before she tapped the entrance to the common room, making her way inside.

She fought the urge to roll her eyes when Draco had followed her inside, planting himself beside her on the long plushy sofa that had been laid out in the middle of the room where several other students from Beauxbatons and Durmstrang had gathered.

"And just so you know... My brother should be arriving anytime soon." She added, smirking slightly at him before she whipped out a small leather-bound book from her bag and began to scribble something down, ignoring the blonde completely.

At hearing this, Draco stiffened immediately and made to whip around to glance at the entrance when they both heard a soft sensuous chuckle behind them near the fireplace, causing both Malfoys to turn around in surprise to find a stunningly handsome, gray-robed figure being fawned over in the middle of the room by a group of four Beauxbaton girls, all of which were staring up at him dreamily.

With that, Anton Malfoy flashed his twin sister and cousin a gorgeous smile as he stood up in one fluid motion, much to the loud disappointed sighs of the females that had situated themselves on his lap.

Hearing their groans, he turned back and smiled at them again, leaning forward and planting a very passionate kiss on each of the girls' lips while stroking their cheeks, failing to notice the look of disapproval Lorraine was sending him from where she sat.

"I'm sorry, ladies... Let me just talk to my family for a few moments. I'll be back and we'll resume this." He told them, winking at them and they all sighed again, nodding happily at him as he strode over to where Draco and Lorraine were sitting.



Draco's expression immediately turned to that of unhidden disgust as he watched Anton make his way over to them, planting himself right beside his sister.

"Still using your veela charm on just about any thing that moves long enough so you could shag it, huh?" Draco pointed out bluntly, immediately causing Lorraine's eyes to widen and Anton to merely chuckle in response.

"Now, cousin Draco... Don't be jealous. You know I was always much more popular than you when it comes to the ladies. It's natural, I suppose." He sighed dramatically and inspected his nails as he did before running a hand through his blonde hair, making sure everything was in place.

"I have to agree with Draco, Anton... You can't keep using your veela charm so recklessly like that. One of these days, it's going to backfire on you." Lorraine told him, sighing as Anton merely shook his head and gave her an affectionate hug.

"Oh you two know exactly how to take the fun out of everything, don't you? Which reminds me, Draco? Are you still the top of the class here?" He asked mockingly, turning to the cousin who was almost a mirror image of himself and at that Draco's lips curled into a sneer of dislike.

"Yes. What of it?"

Anton whistled cheerfully, looking highly amused at himself as though he was sharing a private joke that no one else knew about.

"Oh nothing... I just happened to meet another topnotch student on the way here when I arrived. Hermione Granger...Was it? Such a lovely little girl... I couldn't help flirting with her a bit. She was particularly sweet...Particularly her cherry flavored lip-gloss." He chuckled at that, watching through half-lidded eyes when Draco shot up from his seat and glared at him in dislike.

"You do know that Granger is being hunted by my best friend, Blaise, don't you? Do you honestly have no sense of respect whatsoever for

acknowledging the pursuit of other men at all? Like the time you interrupted my set appointment with Jaimee Potter?" He hissed angrily, his eyes flashing like daggers and Anton merely blinked at him, obviously unimpressed.

Then, he smiled and stood up to meet Draco's stance – causing the Slytherin to smirk triumphantly when he noticed that Anton was slightly shorter than he was, giving him an advantage in height and physical strength.

Anton looked a lot like him, he'd give him that but his features were slightly softer and more femininely formed than Draco's. The veela genes had given the other boy a softer beauty, similar to that of a woman's allure, and that – Draco sneered – was his advantage.

Anton was more beautiful than handsome. He still wasn't Draco.

Draco smirked wider to himself as he towered over his cousin, who still didn't look intimidated and was blinking calmly at him in query.

"That...My dear cousin...Is different. I intend to pursue a serious commitment with Jaimee... To the point of marriage, if I get my way. The girl is delightfully beautiful... don't you think so? And interesting, at that. She'll make me a fine wife along the side as I intend to pursue other mistresses as well." He pointed out, laughing and unaware of Draco's tightly clenched fist.

"And don't worry about Hermione like that... She was under the influence of the veela charm, she won't remember a thing about it in the morning. So Zabini can have his precious little bookworm back." He added, rolling his eyes in annoyance.

Lorraine was looking back and forth between them uncomfortably, unsure of what to say and looking slightly disgusted herself with her brother's character.

Anton continued to taunt Draco, however, as he spoke on, inspecting himself from time to time from the reflection he casted on a nearby mirror.

“She liked me, by the way... Did you know that? We spent the entire afternoon talking... And I didn’t even half to use my veela charm at all. Well I did, of course... every now and then but she genuinely liked me. She particularly told me how she hated you, though...” He told them, causing Draco to shake violently in anger, his nails digging painfully into his palm.

“It seems you and her have had this rivalry thing going on for seven years now... And she said she finds you completely repulsive and appalling. Funny though... Usually it would take girls at least a couple of months of being with you for them to find that out. Especially Elisa...She dumped you like a piece of garbage. Don’t you think?” He mocked, and Lorraine stood up at that, looking unnerved.

He continued as though he hadn’t seen her, watching as Draco grew angrier with each word that came out of his lips. “It’s a pity isn’t it...? That she had turned out to be such a money-grabbing, superficial little bitch... You seemed to have really liked her, didn’t you? And she played you like a fool.” He commented, laughing slightly as Draco felt a surge of fury running through his veins.

“Anton, stop it.” Lorraine finally said quietly, watching as Draco’s eyes were now blazing violently and his form tense, ready to attack at any moment.

Anton was smiling smugly now as he walked over to Draco until their faces were mere inches apart, meeting the other Malfoy’s eyes calmly with his own. Draco didn’t take the bait, however, and merely took a step backwards from him, shaking his head.

“I won’t let you pull me into your games, Anton.”

With that, Anton watched with narrowed eyes as Draco nodded his leave to Lorraine before stalking out of the room, his Slytherin robes swishing dramatically behind him as he left and closed the door with a slam, leaving Anton sneering at him silently.

Harry sighed loudly to herself as she hugged her knees closer to her chest, closing her eyes and briefly enjoying the silence of the night around her. Glancing slowly around the dark room of the Astronomy

tower, she glanced at her watch, briefly noting that it was a quarter past eleven and that she should get some sleep.

She shivered slightly and pulled her Gryffindor scarf tighter around her figure, gazing softly into the night as she watched the tiny flakes of snow falling from the sky onto the ground.

Everyone had long gone to their dormitories by this time and the silence of the Hogwarts castle was more than comforting as she sat there by the ledge of the window, staring down into the grounds and watching occasional students sneaking out of their dormitories for either a late night snogging session or to get some food from the kitchens.

After dinner that evening, she had said goodbye to Neville and had walked up to the Astronomy tower to get some time by herself – something she occasionally did back when she had been a guy. She loved the silence and privacy of the tower, particularly on nights like this when she would just sit beside the window ledge and watch the grounds from below, contemplating on several things.

This night, however, something seemed to be bothering her and she shook her head hastily, wanting to clear her thoughts away. This morning – when she had arrived from Black Manor – the minute she had seen Draco sitting in the Slytherin table, her heart had jumped rather excitedly against her throat and she had barely noticed that she was holding her breath until Hermione had pointedly told her to breathe.

She didn't like that feeling, however. Up until now, she was certain that she still thought of herself as a guy and harbored no emotional feelings whatsoever to her arch nemesis, especially since he had been the one to turn her this way in the first place.

But now... She wasn't sure if it was her feminine hormones but every single time she heard Draco's name, it gave her an insane urge to blush or run away – and she usually ended up doing the former. Even when she had spent some time talking to Anton, all she could think about was how similar his features were to Draco's... Although a bit more effeminate in a way. It was unnerving.

Talking to Anton, however, made her realize exactly how much he and Draco were as different as much as they looked alike. Anton, to her surprise, was more friendly and open to be read than Draco was. Draco, from how she knew him from their past years, had always been rather mysterious in some aspects and never let his guard down, something he shared with her at times.

She had felt more at ease with Anton, however, a feeling she appreciated as compared to the nervous pounding of heart she experienced whenever she was within inches of Draco. The latter, it seemed, had a much more negative effect on her than Anton would ever have and that confused her immensely. She didn't understand when her nervousness around Draco had started.

She had always been able to hold her ground against him in the past... Hell, she was always the one who unnerved him and she prided herself on this fact. Recently, however, with her new female hormones she had begun seeing him a new light – similar to how his female friends would swoon and rant about the blonde and she didn't like it.

It made her feel as though the only reason she was becoming interested in Draco was because of her girl hormones and that made her angry. She didn't want any other reason for liking someone other than for the real person he or she was, and any feelings drawn from anywhere else meant absolutely nothing to her.

She wanted someone who appreciated her for her and she could only promise that she would do exactly the same. Whether or not this person was a guy or a girl.

Jaimee blinked and was roused from her thoughts when she heard a soft scuffle behind her, immediately causing her to turn around in surprise only to see two figures making their way into the room – one of them blonde and another brunette, both teenagers unaware of their presence.

Upon seeing her there, however, the blonde figure had frozen and had instantly yanked his hand away from the brown-haired girl beside

him, shoving her form slightly away from him as though she had caught on fire – something Jaimee had failed to notice from where she sat.

“Jaimee, darling. I was looking everywhere for you... I even had Alana here escort me to the Astronomy tower so I could find you. I’m so relieved I finally did.” Came the cool, deep French accent and Jaimee instantly recognized the blonde as Anton Malfoy, who smiled charmingly and stepped into the light so that she could catch a glimpse of his perfect smile.

The girl he had addressed as Alana looked confused and was about to speak up to ask him when Anton waved her away, giving her a cheerful smile. “Thank you so much for your help, Alana... I’m terribly sorry to have inconvenienced you but I’m grateful that you went out of your way to show me around. I’ll be fine now... So you can go back to your friends.” He told her, meeting her squarely in the eyes.

Alana seemed to get the hint and her eyes narrowed at him in anger before she flipped her hair over her shoulder and stalked back down, leaving Anton alone with a curious looking Jaimee, who was now giving him an uncertain glance.

“Alana Woods? Isn’t she a fifth year from Ravenclaw? What were you doing with her? Or better question... What are you doing here?” She asked suspiciously but Anton just waved her suspicion away, grinning and settling himself beside her before peering down the window in thought.

“I just arrived about an hour ago, actually. My sister Lorraine, you see, will be debuting here with you debutantes for the ball. We’re both home-schooled remember? So she chose Hogwarts to debut with. I came here because I’m to watch over her... As well as to settle several...arrangements...of my own.” He finished, turning to give her a wink which caused the Gryffindor to blush slightly and turn away, coughing.

“I see... So you’re one of the guests Dumbledore was talking about then. So what were you doing with Alana? Do you two know each

other or something?" She asked curiously, raising an eyebrow and Anton just smiled, shaking his head.

"I got myself lost along the way to the guest rooms... And I just happened across Alana, who was doing her Prefect Patrolling duties on the grounds. I asked her if she knew of a Jaimee Potter and she agreed to help me look around the school for you." He answered evenly, smiling again and showing Jaimee his even rows of gleaming white teeth.

"I see..." Jaimee replied, a little unconvinced but she didn't have time to dwell on the matter further as Anton took her hand in his and intertwined their fingers together, fixing her with an intense gaze.

"In any case... I'm glad I finally got to see you again. And this time, without the watchful eyes of any chaperones around us. I...Rather enjoyed the little time we spent together last weekend." He told her, watching as the Gryffindor girl blushed darker and coughed, hesitantly pulling her hand away from his.

"Yes, well.... I suppose I did, too. It kind of makes me uncomfortable that we're all alone here, though. I don't want other people – you most especially – to get the wrong idea about the kind of person I am." She warned him easily, causing the blonde to laugh good-naturedly and nod, looking highly amused.

"Of course not, Jaimee. I would never do anything to jeopardize your reputation as a high-class debutante. My own reputation would be on the line if I ever did that, you realize. I simply meant I'm happy that we could get another opportunity to talk like this, just the two of us." He told her evenly and Jaimee seemed to accept this answer, nodding and allowing herself to relax.

"So... What are you doing here all by yourself? I would think that you'd be asleep by now...? Or at least in the common room." He commented casually, leaning back and letting Jaimee catch a glimpse of his half-lidded gaze on her.

She smirked at him however and pointed to the necklace that was dangling from her neck, shaking her head knowingly.

“Uh-uh, Anton. That won’t work a second time on me...” She told him, smirking when she saw his eyes widen as he took in the unmistakable veela-proof charm she was wearing, no doubt to protect herself from his veela allure.

He felt a surge of irritation at that but masked it with a good-natured laugh, nodding his surrender. “Alright... So you got me, Jaimee. I should have known that you weren’t like the other girls... You’re in a league of your own.” He told her softly, looking so deeply into her eyes that Jaimee coughed again and blushed, looking away.

“Don’t take it the wrong way or anything... I just... Wanted to make sure that if I liked someone, the attraction I felt for them was real. And not based on any kind of charm whatsoever. I hope you aren’t offended by what I did.” She admitted, looking hesitant but Anton leaned forward and caressed her face gently, his lips moving to plant a soft kiss on cheek.

She blushed darker at this and pulled back sharply, unsure of what to say.

“I think... You’re completely delightful.” He told her, his face forming into his gorgeous smile that reminded Jaimee so much of Draco that her eyes widened, silently taking in his exquisite features.

Anton noticed her staring and smirked to himself, edging himself closer to her and bending down slightly, his lips mere inches from hers. He heard her breath hitch in her throat and he gave an inward smile of triumph as he leaned forward, allowing his lips to brush very softly against hers in a sensual kiss before pulling back and noting, with a hint of smugness, the expression on her face.

Her face was almost as red as the Gryffindor skirt she wore and she stammered slightly as she spoke up, looking at him in shock.

“I-if... If you ever do that again... Without my permission... I’ll beat you up so bad; it’ll make the Cruciatus curse a prick on the finger.” She threatened ominously, her emerald green eyes flashing to a dark



shade of near black that Anton's eyes had widened in fear and he backed away slowly.

"Malfoy... has never kissed me without my permission and you are to do the same. Is that understood?" She hissed angrily at him, her face such a mixture of righteous anger and outrage that Anton – despite his nervousness – noted how incredibly attractive the expression had suited her.

Maybe this expression is why Draco likes to make her angry so much. He thought, smirking as he nodded his agreement, causing the girl to calm down slightly and turn back to look down the window at the falling snow.

"I apologize... It was a momentary lapse of weakness. I couldn't help it... You were just so beautiful... And I realize that is no excuse so I apologize." He offered, pretending to look ashamed of what he had done.

Jaimee nodded stiffly, her eyes still narrowed but otherwise she stood up, casually dusting the dirt from her skirt.

"I'll be going ahead, Anton... I believe I have an early Quidditch match tomorrow morning against Slytherin. So....Good night." She said awkwardly but as she moved to exit, Anton had reached forward and clasped her slim wrist tightly with one hand and pulled her back down against him into a tight, rather affectionate hug.

She stiffened and made to pull away but before she could, Anton had relinquished his hold on her and was moving to stand up as well, giving her another one of his handsome smiles.

"Thank you for keeping me company tonight, Miss Potter. Until tomorrow then... I bid you a good night and pleasant dreams. I will be looking forward to spending more time with you this season." He told her, his blue eyes meeting hers once more and holding her gaze for a long moment.

Upon reaching the door, he stopped for a minute and turned back to look at her, a curious expression on his face.

“Jaimee...? I was wondering...”

She blinked and looked up at him, raising an eyebrow to indicate for him to continue.

He gave her an impish smile, ducking his head sheepishly. “Have you... gotten an escort for the debutante ball yet?” He asked, fighting the urge to smirk as Jaimee opened her mouth to respond and he spoke up again, interrupting her words.

“Because if you haven’t... I would love to escort you. It’d be my pleasure... To have the most beautiful girl here on my arm.” He told her, waiting for her to answer but Jaimee looked unsure of what to say, her eyes looking anywhere but his own.

“Uhm. I’m sorry... But I already found myself an escort for that evening. Perhaps... Next time.” She told him, turning to give him an apologetic smile.

She thought she vaguely saw a muscle twitch irritably in his jaw but it was gone the moment it had appeared and a calm, amused smile was on his face again as he nodded his understanding.

“I see. I was perhaps, stupid, to have thought that such a girl like you wouldn’t have a date to the debutante ball by this time.” He mused, chuckling slightly and shaking his head so she wouldn’t see the highly irritated look flashing in the blue orbs.

He allowed the corner of his lips to quirk upwards slightly before he was off, leaving Harry staring after him with a confused expression on her features.

It was only a good couple of minutes after that a confused and sleepy Harry was finally making her way back to the Gryffindor common room, her thoughts muddled with her rather strange encounter with the enigma she knew to be Anton Malfoy.

She had taken her words back – Anton Malfoy was as much of a mystery to her as Draco was. Only...Something about him just didn’t

feel right to her, almost as though she felt as though the boy was hiding something she should know about him.

The mystery she felt around Draco had always been alluring in a sense... Enticing and completely refreshing. The mystery she felt around Anton, on the other hand, was one of suspicion and deceit. And that made her extremely uncomfortable as to how she was going to proceed from there.

She sighed as she rounded a corner as she began pulling her scarf tighter around her neck, still lost in her thoughts. Shivering slightly, she wrapped her arms around herself in an effort to stay warm.

Lucky for me I had already asked Neville to be my partner...Otherwise, I don't know I would have had to deal with all this. Merlin... I wish I could have stayed a damn male. Everything was so much simpler back then. She thought agonizingly to herself, rolling her eyes.

Then again those two Malfoys were only two of the many annoying males that were tailing had been tailing her the entire season. Sooner or later, she had to find a way to settle this matter in a more concise and simpler way. Perhaps she'd scare off all the other suitors like she did last weekend and leave those that only she and Sirius approved of... Maybe that would make things easier for her.

She had about ten new appointments in about two days time with more suitors from different countries and she was less than thrilled about the idea, telling Sirius exactly what she felt and her godfather had only found it amusing and assured her that he was certain these bachelors would prove better than the ones he had forced her to meet the first time.

Harry could only hope he was right. For his own sake.

Grumbling to herself, she finally let out a breath of exhausted relief as she rounded the last corner to the entrance of the Gryffindor common room, yawning rather loudly and stretching as she made her way to the large portrait.

The sight that greeted her, however, was one that made her stop dead in her tracks.

Draco.

Her eyes were wide with incredulity as she stared at him from where she stood several meters away, the expression on her face completely stunned as she took in his position.

The Slytherin was seated on the cold, stone floor with his knees drawn up against his chest and he hugged them to himself tightly, his form shivering violently every now and then from the snow falling from the corridor windows. He had evidently fallen asleep and was resting his forehead against the hands he used to hug his knees, effectively curling himself into such a feeble ball on that Harry's expression couldn't help soften as she took in his shivering form.

He barely had a jacket on, nor was he wearing his Slytherin scarf or sweater vest but was instead, shivering in his normal school shirt and pants, his school robes pulled over his figure so tightly in an effort to keep himself warm.

Jaimee shook her head, a small smile reluctantly tugging on the corner of her lips as she took a careful step toward him, immediately causing the blonde Slytherin to rouse from his sleep and blink wearily up at her, looking confused.

Then, as though it had hit him, he bolted up from his position and glared at her from where he stood, the expression in his eyes accusing and at the same time, filled with an obvious look of relief as he beheld her arrival.

"Potter! Where the bloody hell have you been and what took you so long?! I've been waiting here in the damn cold for hours and – " His tirade broke off when he sneezed, causing Jaimee to sigh as she walked over to him, watching him shivering and wrapping his arms around himself.

"And who the bloody hell told you to wait for me out here like a fool, Malfoy? What are you doing out here anyway?" She asked pointedly,

narrowing her eyes as Draco rubbed his hands together and shivered again, blowing his breath against his palms.

Draco's expression changed into that of an indignant half growl, half sneer and he leaned himself against the corridor wall, wrapping his arms around himself again.

"I was waiting for you, Potter! How the hell was I supposed to know you wouldn't be back until this hour? I would have brought a bloody jacket!" He snapped again, glaring at her in such an accusatory way that she couldn't help the feelings of guilt that began to well up inside her when he sneezed again. Twice.

Realizing this, however, made her panic and she tried to mask her nervousness with anger as she glared right back at him, narrowing her eyes.

"Exactly why are you even waiting for me, Malfoy? I have no obligation to come back early for you. You didn't even warn me you'd be waiting for me out here like a stupid fool, freezing himself to death! Why didn't you wait inside then?!" She snapped back but Draco shook his head, sneezing once more before answering.

"Nobody wanted to let me in. Apparently, Slytherins are off limits in Gryffindor territory. Strange... and you call us elitists. I ran into Longbottom on the way here and he told me that you had gone off on your own... So I wanted to wait for you. That was around four hours ago." He explained softly, shivering again as he leaned back weakly against the wall.

Jaimee felt the guilt at full strength now and she got up and shoved him away in irritation, wanting nothing more than to cover up the feelings with anger.

"So tell me then, Malfoy! Why were you waiting for me in the first place?! Do you want to challenge me to another stupid magical combat? Because if you do, I'm telling you now that it'll have to wait until morning because I'm dead tired and I want to go to sleep without stupid ferrets like you bothering me!" She raged at him, her hands clenched tightly.

Draco managed a hoarse laugh and shook his head, looking at her as though she was insane.

"You git... I was waiting for you because I wanted to.... Apologize."

At that, Jaimee blinked in surprise and she looked up at him in confusion, her eyebrows shooting up in disbelief.

"Eh? What? Apologize??"

Draco had to laugh softly at the expression on her face but he nodded, dragging himself forward before giving up and letting himself sit back down onto the floor, covering his exposed arms with his hands and rubbing them over himself to keep himself from shivering.

"Yes... Apologize, Potter. I realized... I was probably pushing you too fast. You had just changed into a woman after all... And here I was with all my offers of marriage and perverted comments. I realize now how this must be such a confusing and difficult time for you." He admitted, looking slightly uncomfortable.

Harry was speechless as she sat down beside him, unsure of how to respond and at the same time, very much aware of how her heart was now pounding rather painfully against her chest.

"I...Malfoy..."

Draco laughed bitterly at himself, turning to narrow his eyes at Harry's uncertain expression.

"Of course I was supposed to apologize for more than that but you made me wait so damn long out here in the cold for you that I'm tempted to take it all back." He sneered at that and instantly, the soft expression on Harry's face was replaced by one of righteous anger as she stood up again and glared over his form.

"You're the bloody idiot who chose to wait outside in the cold rather than go back to his dormitory to get a jacket first! And how was I supposed to know you were waiting here?! Don't go blaming me for

your stupidity, Malfoy! Oh – and by the way – your apology is not accepted! It wasn't even sincere anyway!" She retorted mockingly, smirking when Draco's own eyes flashed and he stood up, towering over her.

"Shut up, you stupid woman! You have a lot of nerve being so ungrateful! I ought to – "

He stopped abruptly again as he was overcome by a wave of not one but three sneezes, immediately causing him to weaken and lean back against the wall as he was convulsed with shivers once more.

Watching him rubbing his hands over his arms to get warm, Jaimee finally sighed and gave in as she walked over to him, looking guilty.

"I'm...sorry."

Hearing her softly spoken words, Draco looked up to see the somber expression on her face, causing his own silver eyes to soften as he allowed the corner of his lips to lift into a small grin in spite of himself.

"I want to be your escort."

Completely unprepared for that statement, Harry looked up and blinked at him in shock, taking a step backward as Draco stood back up and grabbed her by the wrist, looking intently – almost pleadingly into her eyes.

"Please, Potter. I waited here... For two reasons. I wanted to apologize to you... And I wanted to formally ask you if I could have the honor of being your escort. Please... Let me." He spoke softly, pulling her into his arms as Harry gasped, enveloped into his strong embrace.

She noted his violent shivers and almost reluctantly, she wrapped her own arms around him if only to warm him, causing a small, fond smile to break out onto the handsome Slytherin's face.

"Draco..."

He felt a pleasurable tingle at hearing her whisper his name and he held her tighter against him, caressing her long mane of black hair tenderly before he spoke again.

“Let me be your escort...Harry.”

At that, she had sighed and pulled away slowly, shaking her head at his words.

“Dra—Malfoy... I...can't. I'm sorry.... But I've already chosen someone to be my escort for the ball.” She told him honestly, telling herself that she didn't care about the earnest expression falling from Draco's expectant face.

Then, in an instant, it was replaced by an expression of rage as he lunged at her, seizing her by her robes and pulling her against him so that their faces were mere inches apart.

His eyes were flashing dangerously as he spoke, his form and muscles tense with barely contained fury. “Who is it? Is it Anton?! Is it my cousin, Potter?” He growled and Jaimee didn't register the deeply wounded tone in his voice as she wrestled herself out her grasp, angrily shoving him away.

“I don't see as to how that is any of your goddamn business but as it happens, no. It's not Anton but someone else. One of my good friends. I don't see how that even matters but —” Her voice trailed off as she noticed the immense relief that sagged onto his features, his muscles on his face and arms relaxing as he leaned back against the wall in defeat.

He was silent for a moment, merely staring at her in thought and contemplation before he finally got up and nodded his understanding, managing to give her a small smile.

“Understood... Thank you for being honest with me, Potter. I'll... I'll be on my way, then.” He said, staring at her silently before turning slowly to walk away and failing to see the look of concern Jaimee gave him as she watched him still convulsing with shivers.



He had managed to walk a few meters away from her when Harry finally sighed and called out to him in concern.

“Malfoy!”

Draco stopped at this and turned around slowly, his eyes widening in surprise when he saw Jaimee running towards him, a shadow of a small fond smile on her beautiful face as she stopped in front of him, shaking her head.

“Potter?”

Smiling softly at him in both amusement and disbelief, she reached a hand up and began undoing the fluffy Gryffindor scarf wrapped securely around her neck, chuckling to herself before she turned to his stunned expression again.

Then, without saying anything, she reached forward and began wrapping her scarf around his neck with a surprisingly gentle expression in her emerald green eyes, causing Draco to blush slightly at the tenderness of the action.

A smile still tugging at the corners of her lips, she shook her head and gave him an admonishing look while at the same time, looking slightly amused.

“Don’t catch a cold okay....?” She whispered gently, reaching forward and adjusting the scarf around his neck once more, causing Draco’s eyes to shimmer slightly with unhidden affection as he allowed himself to smile genuinely at her, the blush still on his features.

“Th—Thank you.”

His voice had come in a rather soft whisper as well but she had heard it and she smiled rather uncertainly back, unsure of what to say.

Then, giving him one last smile, she turned and began walking back towards the Gryffindor entrance, leaving Draco staring after her with a soft, dazed and peaceful expression on his normally nonchalant features.

“Potter...”

She stopped upon reaching the entrance and turned to face him again, raising her eyebrows expectantly.

Draco swallowed nervously before finding his voice and speaking loud enough for her to hear him, hating the way his voice was trembling. He wasn't even sure if that was because of his shivers or something else.

“What I said awhile ago... When I apologized... I really was sincere. I...really am sorry. About everything.”

For a moment, Jaimee was silent and she stared at him with an unreadable expression in her beautiful green eyes. Then, almost as if he had said something amusing, she laughed lightly, shaking her head at him with a fondness in her eyes that Draco had never seen before.

“Malfoy... You idiot.” She teased lightly, chuckling again and shaking her head just before she smiled and finally entered the Gryffindor common room, closing the portrait shut softly behind her.

She never noticed the rare, genuinely beautiful smile that had graced on Draco's face as he had watched her leave; the Slytherin still smiling to himself in thought as he continued to stare at the Gryffindor entrance in a calm, satiated silence.

A/N: Aw.... Draco is so cute in this scene isn't he? Haha. I loved writing it... I thought it was such an adorable contrast as to how the scene with Anton was written. In any case, I hope you guys won't kill me for bringing him into Hogwarts... Draco needs some competition anyway. :wink: Oh, and if any of you are wondering about what happened between Draco/Elisa/Anton, it'll be explained later on in the story. In any case, like I always say, PLEASE REVIEW! More reviews, more thoughts, better stories for you guys! Cheers! :mwah!:

## Chapter 13 – Win or Lose

Jaimee gasped as Draco shoved her roughly against the wall behind them before pressing his wand threateningly against her neck, his silver eyes flashing in challenge as he dared her to fight back.

“Go on, Potter... Fight me.” Draco taunted, sneering as she glared back at him defiantly, her green eyes gleaming with a mixture of anger and unkempt lust.

His smirk widened as he narrowed his eyes and pressed himself tighter against her, using one hand to trap both of hers on the wall above her head.

“Fight me.”

She continued to remain silent as he yanked the clasp around her hair in one rough motion, causing her to cry out in pain. He watched, mesmerized as the long, midnight strands cascaded gracefully down her back, spilling out to frame her beautiful features.

“I said...Fight me, Potter.”

Harry merely blinked and sneered back, her green eyes darkening as she met his glare; refusing to be manipulated by his challenge.

“I hate you, Malfoy.”

At that, his eyes flashed a dark grey just before he pulled her roughly to him and smashed their lips together full force in a hungry, intensely passionate kiss; causing both of their heads to explode into nonsensical pleasure.

He shoved his hands into her hair, yanking her face up roughly to meet his again, deepening the kiss and causing another cry of pain to erupt from within their intertwined lips.

She shoved him away from her with a surprising burst of strength, causing the Slytherin to stumble slightly onto the table behind them. He gave a sound of surprise but he didn't have any further time to

react as she had climbed on top of him, straddling him between her legs and held him down with her own wand, her eyes gleaming in amusement.

“How’s this...Draco...?”

He smirked in response, watching with a half-lidded gaze as her free hand curled behind her neck and slowly but seductively began unclasping her Gryffindor tie; all the while keeping her teasing gaze on the Slytherin’s face.

As soon as her tie had come loose, she leaned forward and began tying it around his wrists, keeping him from struggling any further and attempting to wrestle her off of him. Draco raised an eyebrow, but didn’t struggle – knowing full well he could have easily ripped himself free if he wanted to.

Instead, he watched her as she pressed him down again, her wand still pointed threateningly against his chest.

“How do you want me to fight you...Draco?” She whispered seductively, a teasing smirk lingering on her lips as she gazed down at him.

“How do you want me...?” She asked again, her voice coming in a sensuous whisper as she leaned down and trailed her lips down his neck, causing shivers to erupt all over his body.

His eyes narrowed, watching as she slowly began to unbutton the clasps of her white school blouse, drawing his eyes to every button that was being undone by her graceful fingers.

“Draco...”

“Draco...”

“DRACO!”

“Draco!”

“Goddamn it, Draco! Wake up!”

Draco shot up from his bed with a startled shout, cursing rather loudly at the freezing blast of ice cold water that had suddenly surged throughout his entire body.

Looking around for the bastard responsible for disrupting the most erotic dream of his life, his eyes narrowed dangerously as he caught sight of Blaise smirking and holding an empty bucket in front of his bed.

“Blaise, you good for nothing bastard, you better run for your life...” Draco growled threateningly, angrily shoving his drenched hair from his eyes as he slowly untangled himself from his cold silk sheets.

The other’s smile faltered a bit as he took a step back, watching cautiously as Draco cleared his head to shake away remnants of his dream before leveling Blaise with another furious glare.

“Merlin, Malfoy....You were moaning and panting in your sleep. I had to do something. Crabbe, Goyle and Nott already left – they couldn’t stand it anymore. I figured a bucket of freezing cold water ought to do it.” He pointed out, smirking again as Draco reddened slightly and spelled himself and his bed dry.

“Besides, what are you even doing sleeping here again? You have your own head boy room, don’t you?” Blaise asked suspiciously, raising an eyebrow.

At that, Draco had the temerity to look slightly embarrassed and he shook his head, looking around his old shared dorm room with familiarity.

“It was freezing last night and I didn’t have the energy to walk all the way to my tower... I figured I’d catch some sleep here instead since we had to wake early the next morning for Quidditch anyway— CRAP! QUIDDITCH! What time is it, Zabini?!” He suddenly realized, bolting up from his bed in panic.

“Quarter to 8—”

“BLOODY HELL!”

The other boy watched, a smirk still on his face as the head boy of Hogwarts jumped out of his bed and began racing towards the showers, cursing loudly as he ran past.

Feeling a little devious, Blaise whistled lightly to himself as he shouted back to his obsessive-compulsive best friend.

“You forgot to make your bed, Draco... Will you be leaving it like that – all rumpled and messy?”

There was a tense moment of silence.

“...GODDAMN IT!”

At that, Blaise laughed to himself and lazily strode out of the room as he promptly heard Draco racing back out of the showers in a flurry of limbs, streams of interesting curses pouring out of the Slytherin’s mouth.

“Oi! Weasley, would you please keep your attention on the damn Quaffle?!” Jaimee growled as another Quaffle seemed to zoom past her best friend into the net, immediately causing the redhead to blink and look at her in confusion.

“Eh?”

Jaimee gritted her teeth in anger and flew her Firebolt over to him, feeling a growing sense of panic as she thought about how they were scheduled to begin their Quidditch match against Slytherin in about fifteen minutes.

“Ron! If you’re going to be like this during the game, we’re going to have our faces smashed into the bloody dirt by those cheating thugs! Will you keep your eye on the ball?!” She growled again, seizing Ron by the front of his robes and jostling him roughly.

Ron glared at her in response and shoved her away, reddening slightly in embarrassment as he caught sight of their other teammates glaring at him from behind Jaimee's shoulder.

"Sorry, Captain...I guess I have things on my mind." He mumbled and at that, Jaimee's eyes flashed again, her face turning almost as red as the Gryffindor uniform she was wearing.

"You think you've got things on your mind?! I'm playing Quidditch – riding a broom – with nothing between my legs! Do you think I'm comfortable?!!! No!! But here I am... struggling to keep my bloody attention on the game despite the fact that I'm a bloody woman! Now.... Will you PLEASE KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BLOODY QUAFFLE?!" She nearly screamed, causing the other players behind them to give a squeak of alarm and race off towards their respective positions.

Ron's ears turned red in his own fear as he gave his PMS-ing female best friend a small nervous smile before nodding frantically and zooming past her towards his post in front of the Gryffindor goal.

Sighing, Jaimee blew the stray strands of hair from her face and flew back to where she watched the rest of her team simulate a play, her hackles growing with every mistake she seemed to catch as they tried to play despite their nervousness.

In all honesty, it seemed that she was having more trouble keeping her own attention fixed on the game than Ron was. Just several meters away from them, the Slytherin team were practicing their own rounds of Quidditch, racing about the pitch as their own captain – Malfoy – instructed them from where he watched them from the stands.

She had actually been doing fine up until thirty minutes ago when Draco had raced onto the field looking completely harassed and bedraggled – almost as though he had just hurried himself out of bed – and had glanced up at her, giving her a weird look before starting their team warm-ups.

If she wasn't so damn bothered by the way Malfoy had looked so damn good in his Quidditch uniform, she would have glared back at him. Instead, she had blushed and looked away, nearly causing her to fly herself right into Ginny; who promptly gave her an irritated look before asking her what was wrong.

Why hadn't I noticed how he looked in his Quidditch uniform until now? She thought to herself, wincing as she caught sight of another Quaffle easily zooming right over Ron's head.

It didn't help that it had begun to rain a few minutes after, drenching all the Quidditch players flying about the pitch and causing their uniforms to cling tightly to their athletic forms. Almost immediately, her eyes had wandered themselves over to the Slytherin team and she watched, her breath hitched, as Draco's own uniform clung snugly over his toned shoulders – giving her a glimpse of his lean physique.

She shook her head again, furious with herself for thinking such thoughts; especially since she was supposed to be the captain and leading her team to winning the match against these stupid Slytherins.

If anything, she should be more concerned about the fact that – yes – another quaffle had flown past Ron's head and she growled again, flying over to him for the last time and knocking him over the head to get his attention.

“RON! That was the seventh quaffle you missed this morning! Out of the TEN, you missed SEVEN! What the hell is the matter with you?!” She snapped as the rest of the team stopped playing and gathered around them in query.

“Yeah, Ron... We're done for if you play like that during the match. You know how the Slytherin team's chasers have gotten exceptionally good this year.” Dean Thomas complained, shaking his head as he watched the Slytherin team practicing nearby.

“Maybe we can convince the Captain here to take off her shirt in front of Malfoy. That ought to let us win.” Jordan, one of their chasers, joked but as soon as the words had left his mouth, the rest of the



team had backed away a few meters from them and shot a cautious look over at said captain – who had turned seething red in anger.

“What...did you say...?” Jaimee hissed, her eyes narrowing dangerously and her fists clenching as she watched Jordan laugh nervously and back away from her, his eyes darting around for help from his teammates.

“Eheheh... It was a joke, Harry.... A joke! Oh look! The match’s about to start!” He commented, zooming past her just as Professor McGonagall began signaling both teams from the stands to head towards the shower rooms to get ready.

Jaimee sighed and pinched the bridge of her nose in frustration as the rest of her team followed, leaving her alone with Ron; who was looking at her with a mixture of apology and concern.

“Are you alright, mate? You’ve been incredibly out of it since this morning...Snapping at everyone about every single mistake. Are you sure you got enough sleep last night?” He asked, clapping her lightly on the back as they both slowly flew themselves over to the Gryffindor shower room.

She smirked at that, shaking her head at his comment.

“Are you sure you’re alright? You’re normally at the top of your game... Did something happen last night that’s got you distracted from your keeper skills?” She countered, her eyebrow raising when Ron promptly blushed in response to her query.

“Yeah... Something like that.” He mumbled, rolling his eyes as they reached the showers and got off their brooms to get themselves ready for the match. “I met this incredibly amazing girl last night... She’s one of the guests from this year’s hunting season. She was really gorgeous, Harry. I mean...Seriously. Complete package—great legs...really hot... blonde and beautiful.” He ranted, ignoring Jaimee’s amused grin.

“Yeah...? I wish I’d seen her first...” She kidded, walking over to her locker. “So? What’s wrong with that?” She asked curiously, reaching behind her and tying her long dark hair behind her in a high ponytail.

“Heh. Even if you did see her first, you’re a girl now you git.”

“Whatever, Ronald. You still have to admit that girls found me more charming when I was a guy as compared to you.”

“Shut up, Harry. Anyway... The bad news is... She’s...Malfoy’s...Cousin.” He finished, grimacing as the words came out of his mouth.

At hearing this, Jaimee froze and turned to look at him with her jaw hanging open, her eyes nearly bulging out of their sockets.

“What? Are you telling me that smarmy git actually has more relatives here?” She blurted out, hastily searching the stands of slowing crowding people for any more signs of silver blonde hair.

She found two as she was rewarded with the sight of Anton Malfoy waving charmingly at her from the stands and blatantly aware of all the stares he was receiving from half of the females around him.

Her eyes moved from him to the stunningly beautiful blonde girl standing beside him and Harry’s eyes immediately widened in surprise, blinking in disbelief just as the girl smirked at her and waved in acknowledgment.

“Bloody hell... You don’t deserve that, Weasley.” She teased, laughing as Ron made to punch her on the arm. “So that’s Anton’s twin sister... Holy Merlin, if I was a guy I would make a move on her given the chance.” She mused, shaking her head in disbelief and Ron shuddered at that, looking at her in disgust.

“Don’t say stuff like that, Jaimee... It’s disturbing to hear it from a girl’s mouth how hot another girl is.” He pointed out, shuddering again and Harry smirked at him, rolling her eyes.

“I’m not a girl, Ron. I may look like one on the outside but I’m a boy on the inside in case you’ve forgotten.” She reminded him, nodding to their teammates to start lining up to get ready for the game.

Ron strapped on his protective pads on himself before he turned to look at her with wide eyes, suddenly realizing her point.

“Whoa... Hold on a tick... So if you’re a guy on the inside... Does that make you gay? I mean... accepting to be a debutante and dating guys during this season and all...” He asked, looking at her in disbelief.

Jaimee sighed again and rolled her eyes at her best friend’s ignorance, a light laugh escaping her mouth as she gauged his reaction.

“I actually swing both ways, Ronald. But I’ve always thought that was fairly obvious. You should have paid more attention.” She scolded him lightly, still laughing before she walked off ahead of him with her Firebolt on her shoulder.

Ron choked on his own breath for a minute, looking pale at his own late realization before he hurried off after his teammates just as Madam Hooch blew her whistle to signal the players to get ready to begin the match.

Before any of them could fly off, however, Colin Creevey had rushed into the room with a huge bouquet of red roses in his hands, his eyes searching their apparent recipient. When he caught sight of Jaimee’s gaping expression, he smiled and handed it over to her with a note.

“Jaimee, this came for you. Some bloke told me to give it to you before your match. He told me to tell you it was for good luck.” He declared proudly, giving the Gryffindor captain a toothy grin before walking out of the room amidst the background of hearty sniggers and teasing smiles of the other Gryffindor team members.

“Ooh... Who’s that from, Harry? Is that from another secret admirer?” Hans McDougal, one of their beaters, had piped up; causing Jaimee’s ears to redden much like Ron’s had awhile ago.

Jaimee ignored him and read the card she had found attached to it silently, blushing darker when she realized it had come from Anton.

Dearest Jaimee,

My sincerest apologies for what happened the night before. It was extremely rude of me and I should have known otherwise. In any case, I wish you the best of luck today although I hardly think you'll need it. I shall be watching your beauty radiate from the stands and that alone will make me believe I'm the winner of the match even without playing with you.

All the love, Anton Malfoy

Ron read the note from over her shoulder and promptly made a face, holding back an amused snigger.

"I shall be watching your beauty radiate from the stands...? God, this guy's really pouring it on thick, isn't he?" He chimed in, sniggering louder as Jaimee snatched the note from his hands and gave him an angry glare.

"Well he certainly has more eloquence than you, Ron." She pointed out, sneering as all their teammates erupted into a chorus of laughter and teasing remarks.

"Isn't he romantic, Jaimee...? Oh he's so handsome too... He's perfect." Frankie Johansen, the only other female member of the team besides her and Ginny, remarked dreamily as she sighed and looked over to the said blonde Malfoy.

"Ugh. I guess so." Jaimee answered stiffly, one eyebrow raised before she strode over and left the bouquet of flowers by her locker.

"Gorgeous? I actually think he looks like a bloody girl! He's too pretty to be called handsome... Hey, Harry! Don't you think that would suit you just fine considering you're still a bloke on the inside?" Jordan teased again and this time, Jaimee gave him a look so fierce that it would have made Voldemort cower in fear.

“Any more comments from you guys and I’ll suspend you from Quidditch for the rest of the season.” She threatened, this time causing the other team members to gulp in nervousness before resuming their activities in an effort to take their captain’s attention off them.

“In any case, Ron... do try to keep your attention on the game this time. It wouldn’t do you any favors to mess the game up in front of miss hotness now would it?” Jaimee pointed out smugly as she took in Ron’s disgruntled features.

Her best friend didn’t reply and instead, shot her an angry glare before flying off just as the announcer – Seamus Finnegan – called his name amidst the roaring cheers and screams of their Gryffindor housemates watching them from the stands.

Draco cursed under his breath as his eyes darted around the pitch for any trace of the golden snitch, straining to see amidst the blurry of colors that were zooming past him from the other players.

Right below him, he watched as Jaimee flew around the pitch as well; searching for the snitch with her own popularly meticulous seeker intuition. She didn’t seem to be having any luck either as she scanned the Quidditch pitch in an obviously growing frustration, causing the Slytherin to smirk in spite of himself.

Narrowly avoiding the bludger that had zoomed past his ear, he flew himself over to her, careful not to crash himself into the Slytherin chasers that were heading for the Gryffindor goal post.

“Potter.”

Jaimee’s eyes instantly narrowed before she turned around and met his teasing grin, oblivious to the curious glances watching them from the stands.

“What, Malfoy?”

“Have I ever told you how absolutely gorgeous you look wearing your Gryffindor uniform? All drenched and soaking wet like that.” He pointed out, still smirking as he watched her blush at the unexpected – and also rather perverted —compliment.

She sneered back at him, fighting to shake the blush off her features.

“If you think that’s going to distract me from finding the snitch, Draco... You’re wrong. Gryffindor has never lost a match against Slytherin and you’d do well to realize that.” She answered back haughtily, feeling a sense of satisfaction as she watched Draco’s jaw clench in annoyance.

“Yeah... Well there’s always a first time for everything. Especially owing to the fact that you’re a girl now.” He taunted, his eyes flashing dangerously.

Jaimee blinked in disbelief before growling and nearly launching herself at him had it not been Ron, who had flown up to them and had dragged her off before either of them started a fight that got them disqualified.

Draco cursed himself in his head at the insult before he sighed and flew back over to where his teammates were, his eyes moving back to their search for the snitch as the match continued on.

After about thirty minutes, he found himself getting more and more frustrated as he listened to Finnegan rambling on about how it was unsurprising that Gryffindor was leading by about fifty points – something that irked Draco and made him want to strangle the Irish poncy’s neck.

Instead, he amused himself by watching his teammates beginning to resort to underhanded measures in order to get more goals – including ramming into Ginny Weasley from both sides in order to fly her off into the nearest Gryffindor stand and send her crashing to the ground below.

At hearing the Gryffindors’ loud boos and complains, Draco grinned widely and shrugged as Madam Hooch began to berate him about

their foul play – something that Jaimee did not fail to notice as she glared at him in disgust before flying over to Ginny to check if she got hurt.

This, however, only made Draco's irritation rise further and his eyes narrow before he growled and race off away from the scene to search for snitch again – blatantly ignoring the amused leer he could see Anton was sending him from where he was watching.

He was just about to meet his cousin's taunting gaze when he caught sight of a glimmer of gold at the corner of his eye, immediately causing him to forget about Anton altogether and lock his gaze with the elusive golden snitch hovering just above one of his beaters' shoulders.

At seeing Draco's intent and determined stare just behind him, the beater nodded and flew off towards the nearest approaching bludger, hitting it as hard as he could towards any unsuspecting victim.

Draco grinned widely and took this as an opportunity to dive downwards hastily towards the golden snitch, his eyes narrowing in determination as he found himself closer and closer to their first ever victory over Gryffindor – and earning respect from his longtime Gryffindor rival.

Around him, he heard his fellow teammates and housemates beginning to scream in anticipation, cheering for him to move on while just above the sounds, he could faintly make out Finnegan's own panicked administrations as he announced the events taking place.

Ignoring them altogether, he reached out a hand to wrap around the snitch and the victory he knew was already his when another more familiar scream brought him out of his reverie, causing him to stop instantly and whirl around in alarm.

His eyes widened in fear and dread.

He watched with a growing sense of anxiety as the bludger their beater had aimed towards the Gryffindor team collided rather

painfully with Jaimee's left arm just as the Gryffindor captain had dived after Draco towards the snitch, causing her to cry out in pain and veer dangerously off the side of her broom.

She winced as she hung off her Firebolt with uninjured hand, her other arm hanging limply from her side as she fought to keep herself from falling onto the ground below.

"Hold on, Harry!" He heard Weasley shouting from the Gryffindor goal posts but before the redhead had any time to reach her, Jaimee's eyes had fluttered shut and her fingers had slipped from her broom; causing her limp body to begin descending violently towards the Hogwarts grounds.

"Harry!!!"

Draco barely heard the screams as he watched, stunned as Jaimee's body continued to plummet towards the ground. Several feet below him, the snitch continued to flutter around in an almost teasing effort to draw his attention once more.

Sighing, he glanced at the snitch in slight annoyance as though to it were to blame before leaving his pursuit to dash off towards Jaimee's falling figure, managing to catch her slender body into his arms just seconds before she hit the ground.

A grunt of pain escaped his lips as he promptly turned them over as they crashed onto the rocky ground so that his own body shielded hers from below, earning himself several painful bruises and wounds on his own back in the process.

He winced again as Jaimee stirred slightly in his arms, her eyes wide with confusion as she stared into his pain-ridden features.

"M-Malfoy...?"

In spite of himself, Draco had to smile as he saw the beautiful expression on her features directed at him; her eyes laden with several emotions all at once that it was hard to tell what the Gryffindor could have possibly been thinking.



“How bloody like you to fall just when I was going to get the snitch, Potter...” He teased slightly, wincing again as he began to make out the rushing footsteps of the healers that were making their way towards them.

“Wh-Why...? I don’t understand.”

“You don’t always have to do the saving, Harry.”

“B-but...Y-You had the snitch. You could have won... I don’t understand.” Her eyes were wide and soft, looking at him as though she was seeing him for the first time.

Draco smiled again, feeling a sense of disappointment as the healers drew nearer to their fallen forms.

“I think... I did win.” He told her softly, noting the glowing look in her expression directed towards him.

She looked confused. “What do you mean...?”

Draco didn’t answer her with words but instead, leaned over and gently pressed his lips against hers in a tender, soothing kiss that left no room for any more words altogether, rendering the Gryffindor speechless as she began to melt in his arms.

I still don’t understand...

Jaimee sighed to herself as she inspected her delicate features in the mirror, noting for a fact that her cheeks were tinged with red as she recalled the sweetness of the kiss she had shared with her archrival only a couple of hours ago.

The winner of the match had been rewarded in favor of the leading team at the moment – which happened to be Gryffindor, much to her and the Slytherins’ dismay. The score had only been 140-130, Gryffindor. Had Draco chosen to go after the snitch, the Slytherins would have easily won that match. The fact that he hadn’t to save her was eating at her guilt.

I owe him a rematch at least... Otherwise, I'll never live this down. She thought, sighing again as she took a look around her room.

Owing to the fact that Dumbledore couldn't possibly have let her continue to stay in the Gryffindor boys' dormitories due to her new self and that he also couldn't have let her stay in the girl's dormitories either since she still thought like a guy, it was decided that she be given her own separate room near Hermione's own head girl quarters.

This suited her just fine of course. It allowed her more privacy from the prying eyes of all the other students, as well as gave her a chance to adapt herself to her new body without having to worry about sharing a room with other people.

However, as she stared at herself silently in the nearby full-length mirror, she couldn't help but long for company at that moment. At least having someone over to talk to her meant she didn't have to think too much to herself about all these strange feelings she was starting to have around Malfoy. Both Malfoys, mind you.

It wasn't that she didn't like Anton Malfoy either. Truth be told, she actually found him to be incredibly charming and romantic – a complete opposite to Draco who was nothing but obnoxious, arrogant and perverted in a lot of different ways.

Also, it didn't help that she couldn't shake off the fact that Draco had slipped her that potion on purpose so that she would change into a girl for him and that he could be allowed to hunt her for the season – in which case, the thought extremely bothered her.

Did he really like her or was he only using her because she was easily this season's prime hunt because of all her achievements and blood connections? She didn't know the answer to this and frankly, that made her feel even more uncertain about the blonde's advances toward her.

The same could be said of Anton Malfoy, of course. He barely knew her and here he was, proposing to her and making all sorts of arrangements with her regarding future marriage. It was completely

unnerving – especially since she had only learned that she would be marrying a man a couple of months ago. Let alone a Malfoy.

But today was different. When she had kissed Draco, it was just like what had happened in Black Manor. The kiss had been laden with a sweetness and tenderness that she had never felt before... Not even when she had been dating girls back when she was a guy. It was something that both scared her and made her feel warm and tingly all over.

If anything, she wanted that kind of sweetness in her relationship with her future husband – should she even decide she wanted a husband at all.

A soft knock roused her from her thoughts, causing her to jump slightly in surprise just before she turned to see her godfather entering the room with an uncertain smile on his handsome features.

“You ready for another suitor meeting, Jaimee?” He asked softly, giving her a grin as Jaimee fought back a groan and nodded dejectedly, gesturing to her appearance.

“How do I look?”

Sirius inspected her appearance in silence – from her neatly combed long hair, her emerald green flowing dress, to her beautifully composed, aristocratic features. He smiled at her, nodding his affirmation.

“You know I find it incredibly amazing how you could outdo all the other girls out there without putting a single trace of make-up on your face.” He commented in amazement, shaking his head.

Harry snorted, rolling her eyes in response. “I wouldn’t put on make-up even if you paid me to do it, Sirius. Now who’s the lucky bloke this time?” She asked impatiently.

Sirius smirked at that before reaching over and handing her a sheet of paper, indicating for her to read for herself. After glancing at it for

several minutes, she snorted again and handed it back to him – obviously unimpressed.

“Lucian McConway...Great. Another pampered, snotty little rich brat’s come to tail after me... I do seem to attract the worst types, don’t I?” She commented, letting out a sigh of irritation before she turned to face her godfather again.

“So... What date have we got lined up for him this time?” She asked sarcastically, pausing when Sirius pointedly walked over to her drawer and held up a small bottle of perfume, indicating for her to put some on.

“Well... I promised him and his father that you’d tour him around Hogwarts and then have a picnic with him by the lake.” Sirius answered, tapping his foot impatiently as Jaimee splashed a small amount of perfume on herself in annoyance.

“With any luck, maybe we can scourge some free samples of Bertie Botts beans from him. At least then this date wouldn’t be a total waste.” She pointed out wryly, smirking to herself.

She was just about to walk out of her room when Sirius held up a hand and promptly closed it once more, much to her confusion. She turned around and saw that he was giving her a silent, pointed gaze – obviously indicating that he was going to give her another one of his famous lengthy godfather-godchild discussions.

“Look... I know this hasn’t exactly been the most enjoyable week for you, Harry... But I want you to promise me that you will try to give this guy a chance.” He told her softly, sighing when he saw Jaimee’s scowling response.

“Harry... I met the guy. He seems like a proper, educated and really nice young man... And personally, if I had to choose... I’d prefer him than any Malfoy you’ve met during this season. I’d like to see you off with someone like that... So please... Just give him a chance for me.” Sirius explained, causing Harry’s eyes to widen in disbelief.

“Merlin, Paddy... You’re right. This whole guardian thing has gotten to you... It is turning you into a responsible parent.” She attempted to tease but Sirius didn’t respond to her attempt to divert his attention, merely keeping his pointed gaze on her.

Finally, after a long moment of silence, she sighed and nodded – earning herself a grin from her godfather as he leaned over and lightly ruffled her hair.

“That’s my bo—er—girl.” He caught himself, grinning impishly as Jaimee rolled her eyes at him again.

“He better not be a pansy boy though, Sirius.” She warned but Sirius was already out the door, whistling cheerfully to himself.

Growling under her breath, she had no choice but to follow him as he led her back to the staircase right in front of the Great Hall where several students were already gathered, as well as some of the other suitors waiting for the respective debutantes whose company they were to join that day.

To her surprise, she already found Hermione waiting by the stairs as she conversed with some of the other Gryffindor debutantes waiting for their dates. What surprised Jaimee however, was not the fact that Hermione was there but that she was dressed in a beautiful blue dress and was on the arm of a rather handsomely dressed Viktor Krum.

To her right, Ron was glaring at her in obvious annoyance and every once in awhile would shoot Viktor Krum a warning gaze – which the other man only responded to with a sneer of his own.

When he saw Jaimee approaching, Viktor seemed to stiffen in nervousness and backed away slowly from her – causing an incredibly amused smirk to break out onto Jaimee’s glowing features.

“A pleasant afternoon, Hermione. Ron. Viktor.” She greeted sweetly as she approached them, fighting back a round of laughter as she saw Viktor pale noticeably at her presence.

Hermione didn't seem as amused and leveled Jaimee with a warning glare, causing the other girl to look slightly put out but otherwise roll her eyes and back off, much to Sirius and Ron's obvious amusement.

"Well... Where are you two off to this afternoon?" Sirius asked them cheerfully, gesturing to both Ron and Hermione.

The brown haired girl beamed excitedly as she smiled at Viktor, who smiled back at her enthusiasm. "Viktor promised to take me to Hogsmeade for lunch and then afterwards, we thought we'd have a picnic by the lake." She told them, causing Harry to look at her in surprise.

"That's what I'm supposed to be doing." She wondered out loud, looking confused but Ron laughed at her expression, giving her a pointed look.

"Has falling off your broom knocked you out in the head, Harry? Nearly all the seventh year debutantes will be lounging by the lake today. It's practically the tradition here in Hogwarts to hold a public picnic/luncheon for its debutantes and their suitors throughout the entire season. We'll be seeing a lot of couples around there pretty often." He told her, pointing outside to prove his point.

Sure enough, as Harry turned to follow the direction he pointed towards, she could already see the handful of couples sitting by the lake's edge on several outdoor tables that had been set out for them – most of them lounging lazily as they conversed with their respective partners.

Seeing this, Jaimee made a face and turned to look accusingly at Sirius – who promptly chose to ignore her and gestured to the nearby crowd before ushering Jaimee forward. "I think that's them, Harry. Come on... We don't want to be late." He told her, flashing Ron and Hermione one last grin before dragging Jaimee along with him.

Before she could mutter a protest, she managed a rather loud cry of pain as Sirius had managed to shove her right into the couple in front of them – causing her to look up in alarm and apology as they turned to face her.

“I’m sorry! I—”

The words died on her lips as she was met with the sight of a beautifully dressed up Marietta Edgecombe hanging off Draco Malfoy’s arm, both of which looking at her with a mixture of surprise and annoyance – the surprise from Draco and the annoyance coming from Marietta.

She gaped at them for a moment, her mouth opening and closing as Draco had the nerve to look rather unsettled as he struggled to maintain his composure. “H-Har—Jaimee. I believe you’re acquainted with Marietta Edgecombe...” He introduced awkwardly, watching as Marietta merely narrowed her eyes at her in response.

“Yes.... Harry Potter. I wondered if you’d ever get the nerve to actually go through with being a debutante.” She spoke softly although the malice tinged into her voice was unmistakable.

Jaimee’s eyes narrowed dangerously at her expression and she let her own lips curl into a derisive sneer before scoffing slightly at the other girl. “Hardly... I remember you, Marietta. Weren’t you the weasel who ratted out on us back in fifth year...?” She taunted, immediately causing Marietta to redden in embarrassment.

“Weren’t you the boy who used to date my best friend?” She retorted, smirking as Jaimee’s eyes widened at her audacious comment.

Ignoring how Draco was clearing his throat, she glared right back at the girl – a devious smirk growing on her lips.

“Weren’t you the girl that flirted with me while I was...?” She easily drawled back, causing Marietta’s eyes to widen at the scandalous memory and even Draco to bite his lip in an effort to keep for smirking.

Before the other girl could bite back another sarcastic reply, Draco hastily spoke up again, drawing both girls’ attention back to him.

“Marietta’s father here is a good friend of my family.... He recently arranged with my father for this afternoon meeting between the two of

us. Of course, given that the season hasn't been decided yet, people are open to meeting other potentials regardless of who they choose..." He explained nervously, watching as the flashing in Jaimee's emerald green eyes were now drawn to glare at him.

"Who asked you, Malfoy? I couldn't care less who you spread your germs on as long as it isn't me. Ugh. You're disgusting." She snapped back, her lips curling into another sneer before she walked off in a huff just as he opened his mouth to answer her, leaving him gaping in silence.

Ooh... That Malfoy! I could just... ARGH! She thought furiously to herself, stomping her way through the growing crowd as she struggled to look for her godfather – who at the moment was lost to her in the sea of lacy gowns, dresses and unfortunately – cheap perfume.

Coughing, she was just about to push through another tightly packed group of giggling girls before another voice caught her attention, causing her to turn around and come face to face with a smiling Anton Malfoy, who at the moment was escorting his sister down the stairs.

"Jaimee... You look positively breathtaking as always. You could easily outshine all the other girls here..." He commented graciously, smiling at her and briefly aware of the glare that his sister had shot him at his words.

Seeing this, he chuckled slightly and bent over to give the blonde girl a peck on the cheek. "You're not included. You're my sister... You being incredibly gorgeous is a given." He assured her, causing the other girl to relax and Jaimee to laugh in spite of herself.

"I'm sure he meant well." Jaimee reassured the other girl, causing the girl to smile back and nod in response, reaching forward and offering a hand in greeting.

"Anton has told me so much about you, Jaimee. You are certainly as beautiful as he described you to me... My name is Lorraine, by the way. I'm this idiot's twin sister." She introduced herself, her eyes so



bright with warmth that Jaimee had to smile back and shook her hand in response.

“The pleasure is mine, Lorraine. I must say... Your brother was mistaken. You are easily the most beautiful girl here.” She commented, nearly choking as she heard the words escape her own mouth.

Crap. Don’t hit on her! You’re not a guy! She admonished herself but fortunately Lorraine didn’t seem to pick up on her mistake and had laughed good-naturedly, waving the compliment away.

“Well let’s settle it at the both us being the most gorgeous here.” She reasoned, winking at her and causing Jaimee to relax and laugh as well.

“You look lost, Jaimee... Are you looking for anyone?” Anton asked her in concern, drawing her attention back to his elegant features and allowing her to notice for the first time the light blue robes he was wearing which fit elegantly onto his lean figure.

She blushed at her own thoughts and nodded, looking around the crowd again.

“I somehow lost my godfather in the crowd... He was supposed to introduce me to another suitor this afternoon. Although to be honest, I wouldn’t mind if I didn’t find him at all.” She kidded, causing both Malfoys to laugh in response.

“Oh by the way, I forgot to ask... Are you okay...? I was quite worried awhile ago when I saw you falling from your broom.” Anton inquired, raising an eyebrow as an unreadable expression crept onto his features.

Jaimee waved his concern away, looking embarrassed. “It was nothing. That happens all the time; I’m used to it by now.” She quipped, chuckling lightly. When the boy didn’t laugh, however, she looked to Lorraine in question—blinking when she saw the other girl rolling her eyes.

“Don’t mind, Anton, Jaimee. He’s just upset because it was Draco who saved you and not him. He and Draco have been trying to outdo each other since the day they were born...It’s no question they’re both trying to win you over as well.” She responded, immediately causing Anton’s eyes to flash in warning at her.

Before Jaimee could ask her any further what she meant, she felt an impatient tugging at her arm and she turned to finally see Sirius leveling her with an exasperated glare.

“Pardon me for a moment... I need to introduce my goddaughter to someone.” He excused himself before yanking Jaimee away from both Malfoys and finally dragging her through the remaining crowd of people towards the nearby corner of the corridor.

“I can’t believe you, Jaimee... I turn around and you’re already sidling back up with that other Malfoy. I don’t like him, just so you know... Something about him doesn’t seem right. In any case—”

“Black! Finally! Is that her?”

Sirius stopped talking just as they were met with the sight of a rather large, jovial man with a mustache making their way over to them, grinning excitedly at a cowering Jaimee behind Sirius’ figure.

“Please tell me that’s not him...He’s way too old for me, Sirius!” She whispered desperately behind him and Sirius rolled his eyes at her ignorance before grinning and walking forward to accept the man’s handshake, gesturing to Jaimee.

“Richard! Allow me to introduce you to my beautiful goddaughter – Jillian Aimee Potter.” Sirius boasted, smiling widely as Richard nodded and gave Jaimee a friendly smile, inspecting her features.

“Yes... Yes... She will make a lovely daughter-in-law for my son. She’s incredibly beautiful... A pity the scar is still on her forehead but in any case—Lucian! Lucian, my boy! Get over here!”

Jaimee winced again and looked as though she was ready to run away when she caught sight of a rather tall, incredibly attractive brunette making his way over to them with a handsome smile on his face and a bouquet of flowers in his hand.

Instantly forgetting all about her growing anxiety, Jaimee's eyes widened as she watched him approach – noting his muscular form and his commanding presence. Sirius looked amused at her reaction but said nothing, watching the exchange in silence.

Not bad... She thought, smirking to herself as he stopped in front of her.

“Jaimee... It's an honor.” He started, still smiling as he gave her a cordial bow before taking her hand in his and pressing a light kiss on the back of her palm.

“My name is Lucian. Lucian McConway... Only son and heir to the McConway family. I'm delighted to have been given this chance to meet you.” He told her, handing her the bouquet of flowers with a slight blush.

Jaimee smiled back and accepted the flowers, nodding her acceptance.

“The pleasure is mine, Lucian. I'm sorry I'm a little late... As you can see, I was a bit caught up in the crowd.” She piped up, causing the boy to smile and both Sirius and Richard to look at each other pointedly in approval.

“It's no problem, I can assure you. Someone as beautiful as you... I'd wait much longer.” He pointed out, smiling shyly and finally allowing Jaimee to see his warm brown eyes.

Hearing the cheesy line, however, Jaimee fought to urge to cringe and instead, nodded and gestured towards the Hogwarts grounds. “Shall we walk around Hogwarts, then? I am certain there are lots of sights you'd love to see.” She suggested and he nodded instantly, offering his arm.

As she linked her arm through his, she was vaguely aware of a burning gaze behind her and she had only turned around for a brief second to find Draco's burning glare directed towards her before she smirked and flipped her hair over her shoulder dramatically for effect – something Ginny had taught her to do – and walked off with Lucian towards the grounds.

It was a good couple of hours later that a rather bored and uninterested Jaimee nodded continuously as Lucian rambled on and on about how he and his father ran about their many corporate businesses – something he had been doing ever since Jaimee had made the mistake of asking him what career he was planning for himself in the future.

Watching the other couples walking around them in silence, her attention shifted slightly as she caught sight of Hermione waving cheerfully at her from near the lake where she was seated with Viktor Krum and surprisingly – Blaise Zabini and Mandy Brocklehurst, all four of which seemingly involved in a lively discussion.

Well, Jaimee smirked as she corrected herself. Blaise and Hermione were involved in a rather heated discussion while both Viktor and Mandy could only gape and watch them in response, both of their heads moving back and forth between the two as they fought to keep up with the conversation.

Smiling back, she turned and searched the grounds for her other best friend, finally finding him lying on his back under a tree, hanging out with some of the other Gryffindor boys – Seamus, Dean, and Neville – all of which were some of the few seventh years who actually looked like they didn't have a care in the world.

She growled to herself, envious of their carefree behavior before she sighed and turned back to listen to Lucian as he began a new discussion about the benefits of cost-cutting materials on marketing and packaging.

Nodding once more, she was just about to interrupt him when she caught sight of Anton Malfoy again – this time he was talking rather intimately with a seventh year Hufflepuff blonde that Jaimee only

knew by face. Her eyes widened as she watched him lean closer and whisper something into the girl's ear, causing her to giggle and push him back lightly with a teasing smile.

Before she had any chance to react further or question the other Malfoy's motives, Lucian had stopped talking and was looking at her in confusion, finally drawing her attention once more to meet his gaze.

"Jaimee? Were you even listening to a word I had said?" He asked impatiently, looking slightly irritated and at that, Jaimee looked sheepish and turned back to look at him, nodding hastily.

"Of course I was, Lucian... But honestly? All this talk about business and corporate strategy is alien to me... Why don't we talk about something else? Like ourselves, for a change?" She suggested, forcing another smile as she guided him a nearby patio table.

Lucian smiled at that and nodded, looking slightly ashamed of himself.

"Sure. I'd like that. I apologize... I realize I have a tendency to rattle off about business like that every once in a while." He told her, pulling her chair back for her before seating himself beside her and turning to gaze into her lovely features.

Jaimee, however, found this unnerving and laughed nervously before pointedly turning her face away. After a long moment of awkward silence, she forced herself to speak up again, turning to face him.

"So...Tell me about yourself, Lucian. Uhm... What are your...uhm...Hobbies...?" She asked rather lamely, raising an eyebrow as Lucian thought to himself.

"Hobbies...? Well...I'm not really sure. I suppose that would be working for my father's company. I can't really say I do anything else... What about you, Jaimee?" He asked, peering at her and she fought the urge to roll her eyes again at his response.

"Hmm. Well... I play Quidditch. But then again that's more of an interest than a hobby... Hmm... I suppose training would be a hobby.

When I have nothing to do, I like to brush up on my fighting skills.” She informed him, causing a look of utter distress to cross the boy’s features.

Instantly, she frowned in confusion.

“What? Have I said something wrong?”

Lucian shook his head hastily although his face was still slightly pale as he looked at her closely, a disbelieving look in his eyes.

“It’s nothing... I just... I thought for a moment you said that your hobby was fighting.” He murmured, chuckling to himself and running a hand through his tousled hair.

Jaimee looked confused as she watched him, raising an eyebrow in half-amusement, half-annoyance. “But fighting is a hobby of mine. That wasn’t a joke... It has to be given that I defeated Voldemort—”

“Don’t say his name!” Lucian blurted out in panic, rising from his seat and shaking his head furiously at her, causing her to jump up in surprise as well.

Blinking, she watched him uncertainly before she slowly sat herself back down, shaking her head at his rapid breathing.

“Oookay. I...won’t. Relax, Lucian... Breathe. You look like you’re about to collapse.” She informed him, looking at him in concern as he nodded and forced himself to sit back down while taking in deep gulps of breath.

“Forgive me... It’s just that... I’ve always strongly believed that fighting was never a way to solve anything. Whether physical, emotional or verbal – I don’t believe in any kind of fighting altogether. I believe that it is possible that everything can be settled with a simple conversation or agreement.” He told her calmly, giving her a small smile.

Jaimee gaped back at him in disbelief, one of her eyes slightly larger than the other as she struggled to process the words that had just come out of his mouth.

Didn't believe in fighting? Simple conversation or agreement? Is this guy mental?! She thought frantically to herself, shaking her head violently again and again as she sought to clear the ludicrous words in her head.

Here I am... Harry James Potter... Defeater of Lord Voldemort... one of the world's best magical fighters and I'm being told by a bloody rich, pansy boy that fighting was not the answer to it all?! That he couldn't—wouldn't fight given the chance?! What the hell was all that rigorous Auror training for?!

All these questions raced through her head in a matter of seconds and the look on her face must have expressed her thoughts quite clearly as Lucian looked slightly nervous as he watched her, biting his lip at her expression.

"I seem to have offended you... I'm sorry. But it's just... Fighting is such a rather scary thought for me to comprehend. I've never once had to lift a finger in my life... My father has always kept me surrounded with body guards... And even then, no one had ever attempted to engage me in any form of physical or magical combat altogether." He told her, wincing again as Jaimee flinched at every word that escaped his mouth.

After a long moment, she found her voice again and she spoke in a disbelieving whisper as she fixed him with an intense, questioning stare.

"Are you telling me, Lucian... That should I need you to... You wouldn't stand up and fight for me? For what you believe in? For your family? For the people you want to protect?" She asked again, her voice cracking slightly and rising several octaves higher.

Lucian shrugged, looking at her as though she was being unreasonable. "I could always hire bodyguards to protect you or my family in the event that a fight cannot be avoided. But I myself would

never resort to it... I haven't even been given the proper instruction how by my father. He says fighting is for losers. He's always said that I could always try to reason—"

"REASON WON'T GIVE YOU SHIT IF YOU WERE UP AGAINST A FLOCK OF DEATH EATERS! OR VOLDEMORT! WHAT KIND OF PANSY BOY ARE YOU?! CAN'T YOU EVEN SAY YOU'D FIGHT FOR THE ONES YOU CARED ABOUT?!"

Jaimee's voice was well above normal level now as several curious heads turned to look at them in alarm, causing Lucian to redden in embarrassment but the Gryffindor seemed to have only started as she stood up from her chair and towered over him with a menacing growl.

"IS MONEY ALL YOU THINK ABOUT? WHAT ABOUT HONOR?! WHAT ABOUT MALE PRIDE?! IS THERE ANYTHING IN YOU THAT PROVES THAT YOU'RE ACTUALLY MORE OF A MAN THAN I AM?! ARE YOU REALLY THAT MUCH OF A LOSER?!"

Jaimee seemed unaware of how her voice was easily echoing through the silence from the other couples that were turning to look at them – including Draco who had shoved Marietta away from him in annoyance before turning to look at Jaimee in amusement, a satisfied smirk on his features.

Lucian looked nervous again but coughed and forced a laugh, shaking his head at her behavior. "Jaimee... I would appreciate it if you kept your voice down. You're making a scene—"

Jaimee wasn't listening, however as she had stalked over to Gregory Goyle, who was lying lazily down under a nearby tree beside Millicent Bulstrode, both of which had been watching Jaimee's tirade in amused silence.

"You! Goyle! Lucian thinks you're a hulking pile of horse dung! A no good, useless, stinking piece of rubbish! He also thinks that your girlfriend would make an onion cry! He said that to me, I swear to it!" She spat at him, walking over to him and slapping him across the face.



Goyle growled at this and stood up, towering over her with his height and grabbing Jaimee by the front of her dress, lifting the slender girl off her feet.

“Jaimee! What are you doing?!” Lucian had squeaked in panic but Jaimee was grinning widely now as she watched the fire of blazing anger in Goyle’s large eyes.

“What? Are you going to beat me up now, Goyle?! Go ahead... Lucian will kick your ass for even laying a finger on me! He says so himself.... Right Lucian?” She pointed out, looking over to where her said suitor was now trembling in dread, backing away slowly from the scene.

“Go on, Lucian! Kick his arse!” Jaimee cheered as Goyle set her down and started towards the other boy with a growl on his face, causing some of the other purebloods around the room to smirk in satisfaction.

“Wa-Wait a minute there, good s-sir... I said nothing of the sort. Now, let’s talk this over. I’m sure there’s nothing a good conversation can’t resolve, I – please don’t wave your fist at me like that, sir. It isn’t very nice. I –”

Jaimee winced as she heard the sickening crack of Goyle’s fist colliding with Lucian’s perfectly chiseled features.

“HELP ME!!!”

She winced again, burying her giggling face into her hands as Lucian stormed towards the Hogwarts Castle in tears, clutching his bruised face as he raced past the laughing figures of everyone around them.

“DADDY!!!!!!!!!!”

A/N:Hahaha. Sorry, I couldn’t resist. I just love it when Harry makes a fool out of all those other suitors trying to win her affections. It’s all too

fun. Heehee. Coming up: More on Neville's situation, the night before the debutante ball, Draco/Elisa/Anton revelations.

In any case, PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO LEAVE ME A REVIEW AND TELL ME YOUR THOUGHTS! More Draco/Harry in the next chapter if you do! Mwah! Toodles!

## Chapter 14 –Revelations and Developments

Jaimee grumbled to herself as Sirius' rather lengthy howler continued to howl and spit bits of shredded paper onto her face, causing several other students watching to laugh as they watched her in the Great Hall the next morning for breakfast.

“AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY'RE BRANDING YOU AS NOW, HARRY?! DO YOU?! ALL THE OTHER BACHELORS ARE NOW BEGINNING TO CALL YOU A SHREW THAT IS NEVER GOING TO BE TAMED! A BLOODY SHREW! ARE YOU PROUD OF YOURSELF?! HOW DO YOU EXPECT TO FIND A MATCH NOW THAT NEARLY ALL THE OTHER PUREBLOODED MALES ARE TERRIFIED OF YOU?! YOU DON'T SEEM TO REALIZE HOW MUCH PRESSURE THIS IS ALL PUTTING ON ME!”

“You?! What about me? You think I like being courted about by stuck-up idiots?!” Jaimee growled back the floating envelope but it seemed to jerk angrily before she finished her tirade.

“DON'T YOU DARE INTERRUPT ME WHEN I'M HOWLER-ING YOU!”

Jaimee rolled her eyes, wondering how Sirius could have possibly predicted her response.

“IF YOU DON'T IMPROVE YOUR BEHAVIOR, HARRY, I WILL BE FORCED TO LOCK YOU UP IN A ROOM FILLED WITH TUTORS FOR THE ENTIRE SUMMER! HAVE IT YOUR WAY! EITHER AGREE TO HELP ME FIND A SUITABLE MATCH FOR YOU PROPERLY OR ELSE YOU WILL DO NOTHING DURING THE SUMMER EXCEPT ATTEND MORE FEMININE CLASSES! DO YOU UNDERSTAND?!”

She glared at the letter in silence for a long moment before speaking.

“Crystal.”

“IT BETTER BE!”

She slumped further upon seeing Ron and Hermione's chuckling faces as they observed her wincing features, causing her to redden further and sink into her seat as the howler finally blew up in front of her, shredding itself in one final climactic gesture.

Once the howler had disintegrated, the Great Hall resumed its usual activity and began acting up with lively chatter and laughter once more; finally allowing the embarrassed Gryffindor to start digging into her forgotten breakfast.

Stuffing a mouthful of blueberry pancakes into her mouth, she looked up just in time to see Blaise Zabini and Draco Malfoy entering the Great Hall accompanied with a small, giggling group of Ravenclaw and Slytherin debutantes.

Both Slytherins didn't seem to be amused but nevertheless led them over to the Slytherin table where they allowed the girls to sit with them for breakfast.

Strangely, Jaimee's mood seemed to darken after that.

She growled and snatched her goblet of orange juice from in front of her and drank the liquid in one long gulp before hastily wiping her mouth. Following this, she proceeded to massacre the remaining blueberry pancakes on her plate, her lips curled into a scowl.

As though he seemed to sense her shift of mood, Draco looked up and watched her for a long moment before allowing an amused grin to grace his face. She looked up just in time to catch his smile before she growled again and narrowed her eyes at him before attempting to turn away.

Before she could, her interest was piqued as he gave her a mischievous grin and pointed to Goyle across from him on the table – making punching gestures against his face in an effort to refer to her little display the other day by the lake.

Seeing the teasing grin on his face, Jaimee couldn't help but break out into a light-hearted laugh at his antics before shaking her head

and smiling at him when he gave her a wink to indicate his approval at her little stunt.

She rolled his eyes at him before turning back to eat her breakfast, perfectly aware of the rather goofy smile on her face and the lighter feeling in her chest as she allowed herself to settle into a better mood.

It took her a couple of seconds to realize that it had been Draco Malfoy who had lightened her mood like that and her eyes widened at the thought before she shook it away hastily, blushing slightly at the realization.

Unfortunately at that moment, Hermione turned to look at her with a beaming smile before gesturing to Blaise across the room.

“Ron... Blaise invited me to sit with him during breakfast today. He also told me to bring Harry along with me so she could sit with them as well... Do you mind?” She started, smiling across the room to Blaise to indicate her agreement.

Apparently, Ron did seem to mind but before he could voice out his complaints at his two best friends leaving him so early in the morning, Hermione had seized Jaimee’s hand and yanked her up onto her feet, dragging her towards the Slytherin table where Blaise was waiting.

Seeing Jaimee’s horrified face, Blaise smirked to himself and scooted over to make a seat for her beside Draco, whose face had flushed slightly as Jaimee approached them.

“Ah. It’s a pleasure to have you two lovely, enchanting ladies join us this morning.” Blaise greeted charmingly once they were near, causing Jaimee to wince slightly in irritation.

“Put a sock in it, Zabini.”

Draco smirked at Jaimee’s response, obviously amused while Hermione nudged her friend sharply in annoyance, causing the girl to frown but otherwise force her face into a smile.

"I mean...the pleasure is ours, Blaise." She corrected herself in an exaggeratingly saccharine voice, causing Draco to chuckle again while Blaise looked slightly irritated, turning his attention instead to Hermione.

"Granger, I'm delighted you're here. Please... Have a seat right next to me. I do believe we have yet to finish our little discussion yesterday about the benefits of this generation's women becoming more aggressive than before." He started, smirking at the memory of their argument.

Hermione blushed at his amusement and nodded, sitting beside him and offering the dark-haired Slytherin a charming smile. She blatantly ignored Jaimee's incessant tugging of her arm to sit down beside her instead, leaving the other girl no other option than to sit beside Draco.

"Of course, Blaise. But I believe we have to update our new companions here about the conversation otherwise, they'd never be able to keep up." She told him, smiling pointedly at Jaimee and Draco, who were both uncertain as to how they were to act around the other.

Blaise grinned and nodded, taking a swig of his pumpkin juice before talking.

"Certainly, beautiful. Hermione was just saying how she found it rather disturbing that the men of our generation today were yet to be open to a duality of womanly roles in the household. Particularly as to how men refuse to let their wives take on jobs outside of being a homemaker." He started, immediately causing Jaimee's eyes to flash in irritation.

"That's stupid."

Three pairs of eyes turned to look at the girl who had spoken, causing the Gryffindor to scoff in acknowledgment.

"Women should be allowed to work just as much as men. Having a uterus does not necessarily restrict them to the sole purpose of bearing children. Merlin knows how much I'll hate doing nothing but

going back and forth between the nursery, kitchen and bedroom all day.” She remarked, raising an eyebrow.

Hermione looked at her in surprise, blinking.

“Really? You never voiced such a feministic opinion before, Harry. Are you sure you’re not just saying that because you’re a woman now?” She asked, obviously amused.

Jaimee looked at her in irritation.

“Of course I am. Do you think I’m going to let some poncy little pureblooded brat keep me in the damn house all day just to look after his kids? I want a life too and I’m going to have one.” She assured, smirking to prove her statement.

“I take it you don’t want to have a family then...?”

She jumped slightly as Draco had finally spoken for the first time, drawing her attention to his handsome, smirking features. His silver eyes were twinkling with mirth and interest, causing her to blush when she turned to look directly at him.

Shaking her head hastily, she gave him a pointed glance.

“Of course I do. I’ve always wanted a family of my own. I just meant I want to have a life outside of the house... But that doesn’t mean I won’t come home to take care of my children after.” She explained, feeling slightly uncomfortable.

“And your husband?” Draco asked again, a playful smile still tugging on the corner of his lips as he tilted his head in curiosity and stared at her intently.

She stiffened slightly, her eyes narrowing.

“What about him?”

Draco smiled wider, the flirtatious twinkle in his eyes evident now as the silver orbs directed themselves fully at her again.

“Will you take care of him too?” He asked innocently, leaning back and giving her an innocent look, ignoring the smirk that Blaise was throwing in his direction.

Jaimee reddened slightly but recovered herself, nodding awkwardly.

“Of course, I will! I never said I wouldn’t. I—”

“How?”

His smile and tone of voice became teasing, obviously enjoying himself as he watched her struggling to maintain her composure at his impertinent questions.

“I—I don’t know! I’ll be a... good wife?” She stammered, her eyes wide with nervousness as she looked to Hermione for help but the other Gryffindor seemed to be enjoying the scene as well as she found it a rare sight that Harry Potter was reduced to such a blushing, shaking pile of nerves.

Draco pretended to ponder on her words for a moment, stroking his chin.

“Hmm... A good wife? Well, that’s a rather vague definition, love. You’ll have to be more specific. How is one...As you say...a good wife?” He asked again, feeling a sense of pleasure as he saw her blush darker at his use of an endearment.

When she looked as though she couldn’t say anything, Hermione finally relented and came to her rescue – redirecting both Draco and Blaise’s attention to her and off of her friend.

“I believe what Jaimee means to elucidate on is that a good wife is... Well... Open to meeting the needs of her husband. Those needs include not just emotional support, but partnership or friendship, intellectual conversation and also... physical needs... as well.” She chose her words carefully lest she start blushing as well.



Blaise smiled charmingly at her after hearing this, nodding his agreement.

“I’m glad we agree on something, Hermione. Most women fail to realize exactly how important the physical aspect of marriage actually is for a pureblood.” He told her, finally causing her to blush slightly but otherwise smile at him again.

“How important is it?”

This time it was Jaimee who had asked the question, causing the other three to look at her again in surprise. Blaise opened his mouth to respond but Draco beat him to it, looking at the girl with an intense expression on his face.

“The answer to that question, Harry, would have to depend on the pureblood in question we are speaking of. I, for example, see the physical aspect of marriage – as Hermione calls it – as the best and most intimate expression of love a man can give to the one he loves.” He explained softly, his eyes probing deep into Jaimee’s questioning gaze.

He continued further, oblivious to the other people who were starting to listen to their conversation. “More than the pleasure, it is the feeling of oneness – the thought of joining myself to another – that entices me as a completely surreal; transcendent experience.” He answered, his gaze unwavering that Jaimee felt the heat of his desire through his eyes, causing her to shift uncomfortably in her seat as she felt her own heat overwhelming her at his powerful words.

It was the first time she had ever shared such an intense and intellectual conversation with Draco before and she knew now for a fact precisely why Dumbledore had named him head boy and the top student in their batch. He had the ability to communicate even the most beautiful experiences into passionate words that seemed to sink right into your soul and make you want to melt.

So he’s good with words... Big deal. Snap out of it, Harry! You look like you want to jump him! Her mind screamed at her and she blinked

before nodding hastily and turning away from his intense gaze on her, ignoring the teasing smirk Hermione was sending in her direction.

“I—I never thought about it that way before.” She admitted, looking up and giving him a small, amused smile.

Draco nodded silently, finally turning away to glance back at Blaise and Hermione.

“Most people don’t. Pureblood marriages, for example... Only about three out of ten of them actually sleep in the same bed every night after their honeymoon. Their marriage was simply one of convenience – a need or obligation to sire an heir; after which they are never to share anything else with their spouse again.” He admitted, causing both Jaimee and Hermione to cringe in disgust.

Blaise couldn’t help but scoff in agreement, nodding. “That’s true. Only a select few bachelors actually take the time to search out among the debutantes in order to find someone who truly matches him in every aspect... And it’s not easy, mind you. Why do you think some bachelors remain unmarried even at the age of twenty above?” He added, gesturing to Viktor Krum; who had just entered the room.

“That’s horrible. Why would anybody agree to such a thing?” Hermione blurted out, causing both Draco and Blaise to chuckle to themselves.

“Draco and I don’t intend to share the same fate as those marriages. That is why this hunting season, we are taking it upon ourselves to find a lady of our own personal standards.” Blaise told her, his eyes meeting her own.

Draco merely nodded, turning to meet gazes with Jaimee once more; who was now looking at him with what could only be described as understanding and wonder.

“So I take it you want a wife whom you can really relate to...? Someone you can share more of your experiences with other than the responsibility of siring an heir?” She asked curiously, her eyes still focused on him.

He smiled at her again, nodding. "Is it so hard to believe? Blaise here accuses me of being so perfectionist when it comes to choosing a wife for myself. But it's not so much perfectionism than simply a matter of wanting a real marriage." He answered, looking slightly thoughtful.

Jaimee finally smiled back, nodding her understanding. "I see. Wow. I never thought of you that way, Malfoy. I must say... My opinion of you is slightly improving." She admitted, smirking her amusement.

He looked thoughtfully at her, studying the expression in her face.

"Like I said... Is it so hard to believe that I'm actually a simple guy...? In my head, I imagine waking up every morning to find the woman I love right next to me... Coming home from work to that same beautiful smile and sweeping my perfect children into my arms..." He trailed off, blinking and shaking his head in embarrassment.

Blaise grinned and chimed in after him, directing Jaimee and Hermione's attention to him as well. "I, on the other hand, dream of a wife whom I can share intimate as well as intelligent conversation with. I find intellectual stimulation just as important as physical stimulation, you see." He explained, causing Jaimee to smirk at Hermione and the latter to immediately drop her gaze.

Laughing, Draco shook his head and took a sip of his pumpkin juice before responding further. "Intelligence and wit isn't nearly enough for me... The only girl I would ever approve of is not only stunningly gorgeous and intelligent. She's also strong...courageous and powerful. She wouldn't be afraid of fighting for what she believes in... Even if the fight was against me – her husband." With that, he turned to look directly at Jaimee, who at that moment was blushing as she met his look.

His eyes darkened once more as they locked onto hers, the expression in them intense as they held her gaze.

"She'd be fiercely loyal... dedicated and passionate all at once... She'd be emanating with a natural grace and charm that attracted

everyone around her... Most of all, she'd be true. She'd be nothing other than completely who she was... And she'd be mine." He stopped for a minute, watching as Jaimee's gaze dropped to the floor, her form trembling in confusion.

"If I could find and marry that wonderful, perfect...perfect girl... I'd consider myself the luckiest man in the entire world...And I would do everything in my power...to make her happy." He finished softly, reaching over and titling her chin back up to meet his eyes once more.

By now, Blaise was raising an eyebrow in amusement and Hermione was gushing as she gauged her friend's reaction, barely able to restrain a giggle as she saw the blush on Jaimee's face.

Once their eyes had locked onto each other again, she looked at him with what could only be described as anger and doubt, causing Draco to blink as she voiced out her thoughts.

"I see...But was it so important for her to have been a girl to be perfect for you...Draco...?"

Draco froze at the demanding accusation in her words, clearly stung as Jaimee wrenched herself from the hand he used to caress her cheek. Hiding her flushed face, the Gryffindor would have walked away if it hadn't been for the figure behind her who had just arrived in the Great Hall.

"Jaimee... What are you doing, here?" Anton looked at her with surprise as he had approached their table, purposely choosing to ignore the unwelcome glare that Draco was sending at his direction.

"I—I was...Just about to leave." She answered, her eyes flicking back to the blonde Slytherin who had now risen from his seat and leveled Anton with a threatening look that would have sent anyone else running in fear.

"Anton...Harry and I were having a conversation..." He growled, his eyes narrowing just as Blaise and Hermione stood up as well – Blaise looking between the two Malfoys suspiciously and Hermione looking worried as she latched herself onto Jaimee's arm.

Anton shot him a sneer, looking irritated at his words. "Harry? It's Jaimee now, Draco...At least have the decency to use this young lady's correct name. I find it insulting otherwise." He scoffed in a disgusted tone, shaking his head.

The dangerous glint in Draco's eyes finally caused Blaise to clear his throat loudly before talking directly to the smirking half-veela. "Anton, you know the rules... A gentleman is not supposed to interrupt another when he's with a potential match." He pointed out, his eyes narrowing.

Looking highly annoyed, he just about to back off when Jaimee finally spoke up again, drawing all three purebloods to look at her in confusion. "It's alright, Zabini. I was just about to leave anyway... I believe I'd enjoy it very much if Anton escorts me to my classes this morning." She started, immediately causing Draco's face to fall.

"Har-Jaimee, I – "

"Yes, Malfoy...?"

He winced at the sharp tone of her voice as she hissed out his last name. Stepping toward her, he ignored all the stares they were starting to receive and looked intently at her beautiful face.

"You were always perfect...Even then."

When she looked as though she couldn't find an answer to his words, Anton sneered at him again over her shoulder before he linked his arm through hers and proceeded to pull the now blushing, Gryffindor away from him.

"I'll see you in class, Hermione." She turned to the bewildered brunette, who merely nodded and released the hold she had on her arm, waving her off.

As they began to walk away from the Slytherin table, Harry couldn't help but glance back over her shoulder to where Draco still stood,

watching them walk away with a slightly crestfallen but otherwise frustrated expression on his handsome features.

“Well... That was...sufficiently awkward.”

Hermione turned to give Blaise an irritated scowl but the Slytherin just chuckled and shrugged at her expression before walking over to his friend, clapping him hard on the back.

“Snap out of it, Drac! It won’t do you any good to look like that... Don’t let Anton get to you. I’m sure things will all work out in the end.” He offered but he stepped back in alarm when Draco shoved him away, his silver eyes flashing in silent anger.

“You don’t get it do you, Zabini?!” He growled, turning towards him and yanking him by the front of his robes and lifting him a couple of inches from the floor.

Blaise’s eyes narrowed angrily but he didn’t struggle, knowing it would only inflame his best friend’s anger more if he didn’t listen to what the other boy clearly had to say.

“He’s...He’s doing it to me, again! Goddamn it, he’s doing it to me again! He wants her! He wants her precisely because I do!He wants anything and everything that’s mine!” He snapped, shaking the other Slytherin slightly before setting him back down and collapsing back onto his seat, burying his face into his hands.

“Drac... I understand where you’re coming from but you’ve got to calm down.” Blaise spoke quietly, meeting Hermione’s curious, questioning gaze with a slight frown before shaking his head, indicating for her to stay out of the conversation.

Draco shot him a fierce glare, causing Blaise to step back slightly again. Before the darker-haired Slytherin could say anything else, he rose up from his seat and stalked out of the room in silent anger, briefly bumping into Lorraine – who was walking into the Great Hall.

Ignoring his cousin's concerned look, he shoved past her and strode towards his Head Boy dormitory, blatantly glaring at any innocent student he who dared to stare at him or talk to him as he passed by.

When the Slytherin table resumed its usual activity after his hasty exit, Blaise slumped back down onto his seat and looked apologetically at Hermione, who was now looking more confused and frustrated than ever.

"...What just happened, Blaise?" She finally asked, looking from him to Lorraine who had approached their table and took Draco's vacated seat with a worried, knowing look etched onto her elegant features.

"What's Anton up to now, Blaise?" She asked quietly, sighing as she began helping herself to some breakfast.

When Blaise chose not to answer her, Hermione finally snapped and slammed her palm down onto the table in front of him, causing him to jump in surprise and accidentally spray juice over himself.

"What the hell, Granger?!"

"Blaise Elliott Zabini, if you care at all to be given any more chances with me for the remainder of this season, you will tell me what just happened and how it involves my best friend!" She hissed angrily at him, causing Lorraine to laugh lightly and Blaise to wince in intimidation.

"Uhm... Fine, Granger...Just don't yell at me." He complained, wiping the juice from his face while Hermione sat back and looked at him, clearly demanding an explanation.

"Nice choice, Blaise-pooh...I like her. She'll be able to keep you on a leash."

Hermione blushed at Lorraine's comment as the other girl gave her an otherwise friendly smirk and introduced herself. Blaise, on the other hand, had scowled at the blonde's implied insult and gave her a sneer, watching as the two girls exchanged formalities.

"I hardly need a leash to be kept on, Raine...To answer your question, I honestly don't know what your insane brother is up to. As for your question, Granger...I...I believe that's a rather long and complicated story involving a lot of people." He started uncertainly, looking at Lorraine for help.

She nodded, however, and urged him to continue. "It's okay, Blaise...I believe it's fair for her to be told the truth. If anything, it's Harry, or rather, Jaimee who has the most right to know what happened if my cousin is really serious about courting her." She reasoned, biting into her toast.

Hermione turned uncertain eyes to Blaise, who rolled his eyes at her reaction.

"Is he really serious about Harry? I mean... How does Malfoy really feel about her, anyway? From what I've seen, he's been nothing but a perverted, insensitive jerk to her this entire season. And they've been enemies for years..." She thought out loud, shaking her head.

Blaise just laughed at her inquiries, shaking his head. "Draco has always liked Harry, Hermione... Even when he was still a guy, I always saw the animosity between the two of them as something passionate. He's been serious about her from the very beginning..." He explained, reaching over to pop an apple tart into his mouth.

Hermione looked at him in both surprise and disbelief, shaking her head as she tried to string his words together in her head. "He has...?! B—but...if that as true, why did he have to turn her into a girl in the first place? Harry—"

The Slytherin shook his head fiercely, giving her an admonishing glare. "Listen, Hermione... I know Draco better than anyone... He never intended to turn Potter into a female just for his own convenience. It just...happened...Stop blaming him for that incident." He reasoned, causing Hermione to flush in shame and embarrassment.

"Y—You're right. I'm sorry...I suppose I just find it rather hard to believe that Malfoy had been attracted to Harry after all these



years...No wonder he was always picking fights.” She said thoughtfully, munching on a piece of toast.

“Still...If he liked Harry all this time, why didn’t he just ask him—uhm—her out?” Hermione continued further, looking at Blaise with a accusing glare.

Before Blaise could answer her question, it was Lorraine who had spoken up, drawing Hermione’s wide brown eyes to her hesitating features.

“He...couldn’t. Draco, you see... Is the chosen and legal heir to the entire Malfoy family... He has a responsibility to sire an heir and he knows that more than anything.” She explained, taking a small sip of water before continuing further.

“We’re a very large family... As you may already be aware. The legal heir of the Malfoy family is not just chosen with age, you see... With every generation of Malfoy children, each son is scrutinized carefully and whoever is deemed worthy not only by accomplishments but by strength, leadership and honor, will be chosen as the legal heir.” She continued, much to Hermione’s confusion.

“I don’t understand... What does being an heir entail? And who chooses the Malfoy heir?” She asked, her eyebrows fused together.

Lorraine met Blaise’s shrug before explaining further.

“My family is one of the oldest and most traditional Wizarding families in England you see... Our process of selection is not so simple. The heir to the Malfoy family, once married, is to be formally named the family head and will thus control all of the family’s financial holdings and inherit all of the family’s companies, treasury and property. He will have full control over all of them as it is his responsibility to keep the family prestigious till a new head is chosen.” She paused to catch her breath, allowing the Gryffindor to take it all in.

“The one who chooses the heir... Is our oldest and most powerful direct ancestor from the ancient times; Merlin himself.” She finished, causing Hermione to wince and look at her as though she was insane.

“His painting, Hermione...We keep a very old and magical painting of him in the Malfoy castle.” She told her, laughing at the expression on her face.

Blaise spoke up as well, gesturing to several other pureblooded males around the Great Hall. “You should know...It’s not only the Malfoys with such a tradition, Hermione. My entire family upholds this too... As well as some of the really old and large pureblooded families right now.” He added, causing her eyes to light up in interest.

Hermione shook her head, her eyes still wide with amazement. “That’s such an amazing legacy... I didn’t know there were families who upheld such traditions. So who’s the direct Malfoy and Zabini family head now?” She asked curiously.

Blaise smirked, shaking his head. “Well...My Uncle Giovann is the head now... I’ve just been named heir last month. As for the Malfoys, can’t you tell? It’s obviously Draco’s father, Lucius Malfoy. He rules the entire Malfoy family with an iron fist. It’s the reason his brother, Louis – Anton’s father – holds such a grudge against him... Lucius had been named legal heir even before he entered seventh year.” He told her, chuckling.

“Much like Draco has also been named just a couple of months ago.” Lorraine finally added, glancing to check Hermione’s reaction to see if the girl still understood. “He’s been named from a selection of five potential sons – my brother included.” She added, meeting Blaise’s eyes.

To her amusement, the head girl of Hogwarts looked utterly and completely confused. “I don’t understand... So Draco’s been named legal heir and future head of the entire Malfoy family...What does that have to do with Harry and Anton?” She asked, causing Blaise and Lorraine to give each other uncertain looks.

Hermione raised an eyebrow, her expression clearly demanding a further explanation.

“Guys...?”

Sighing, Lorraine finally ignored Blaise's warning looks and gave in, setting her goblet of water down gently onto the table.

"Why don't we do this from the beginning...?"

## START OF FLASHBACK

Smiling quietly to himself, Draco reached into his coat pocket and clasped the small velvety box of the engagement ring he had just bought for his future fiancée, watching her from where she was standing at the balcony and conversing with some of his family members and pureblooded friends.

He contented himself with watching her exquisite features from where he stood – admiring the way the moonlight seen through the crystal windows of the Malfoy garden reflected on her black hair and the way her emerald green eyes glowed brightly as she laughed.

Elisa Cartwright was easily one of the most beautiful women he had ever seen in his life but that wasn't what had enthralled him about her – it was the way her emerald green eyes held so much of the life and fierceness he saw only in Harry Potter himself.

Harry Potter was the only person whom he actually respected and admired as an equal... And he found it rather ironic that it was precisely the similarity Elisa had with his archrival's beautiful eyes that had drawn him to her in the first place.

No... Draco thought sadly, shaking his head. Harry was beyond his reach. Especially since he was to be named legal heir that night. He had a responsibility to his family now. It wouldn't be right to chase dreams. Besides...

He looked at Elisa again, watching as she turned to whisper something to one of her friends before tossing her head back and giggling in that feminine laughter of hers. He sighed and allowed himself a small, crooked smile.

Perhaps Elisa could be perfect for me too... He thought, his fingers tightening around the velvet box in his hand once more and contemplated on the girl he had met at one of his mother's formal gatherings not too long ago.

They had been introduced by Elisa's mother – a rather disagreeable woman who seemed to be shoving her daughter towards every potential bachelor she met in anticipation for the upcoming hunting season that year.

Although Draco's initial impression of her was one of deceit and capriciousness just like her mother, he was taken back when she had looked up at him with her big, beautiful and aching familiar emerald green eyes – causing him to throw all of his impressions aside and offer to escort her around the party.

They seemed to have hit it off quickly after that.

Elisa spoke to him with that flirtatious, witty charm of hers and spoke with a soft, graceful tone that drew people in to her beautiful, melodious voice. She moved with the natural elegance of an inbred aristocrat debutante – breezing into the room with such effortless ease that Draco wondered how it was so natural for anybody to move with such poise.

He watched her for a minute, hiding a smile as he tried to imagine the reaction on her face when he was named Malfoy heir and when he proposed to her soon after. His father had already told him he had been chosen. All that was left was for him to be formally presented to the entire family and the rest of pureblooded society.

Shoving the velvet box back in his pocket, he strode toward her with slow, firm steps as he briefly wondered in his mind if he had done the right thing by not telling her he was the future successor to the entire Malfoy family. It was tradition that no other person knew except the current Malfoy head and the chosen heir himself – he couldn't have told her even if he wanted to.

She showed a genuine interest in you even without knowing...So that's always a good sign. He told himself, nodding in affirmation

before walking out into the balcony only to find Elisa locked in a rather intense conversation with his half-veela cousin, Anton Malfoy.

Once he saw Draco's warning glare as he approached, Anton smiled charmingly and turned to face him with an innocently surprised expression on his handsome face.

"Cousin Draco! What a surprise! We were just talking about you!" He beamed, looking from him to Elisa's blushing face and smirking when he realized that the girl was still rather flushed with exhilaration.

Draco gave him a very nasty sneer, narrowing his eyes.

"Oh, I'm sure you were..." He muttered, reaching forward and taking Elisa's hand in his.

"Why didn't you tell me you had brought this ravishing young woman to our party? I thought we were close and all that." Anton mocked further, smirking when he saw Draco's eyes flashing in silent, barely-controlled anger.

"Precisely to avoid moments like this, actually." He muttered again, before turning to Elisa's confused face. "Elisa, this is my half-veela cousin, Anton Malfoy. So if you feel a bit disoriented and actually attracted to him right now, it's because of the stupid veela charm and by no means of his own accord." He drawled, causing Anton's eyes to narrow this time.

Elisa looked slightly embarrassed and shook her head. "N—No...I actually quite think that your cousin is very proper and charming, Draco." She assured the other boy, causing Draco to stiffen and Anton to hide a smirk at her statement.

Before anyone else could say anything, he tugged on her hand again, causing the girl to look at him in query. "Come on, I'm about to introduce you to my parents and the rest of my family." He said curtly, wanting to drag her away from the smirking veela.

Elisa nodded but gently pulled her hand away, giving him a small apologetic smile. "Very well, Draco...That would be lovely. But please

just give me a few minutes more with your cousin, I believe we were just having an interesting conversation just now. I'll join you in about ten minutes." She assured him, failing to notice how Draco's jaw clenched in agitation.

Nodding briefly – albeit reluctantly – at both of them, he strode out of the balcony, hiding his furious face behind a mask of indifference to avoid being noticed by his other relatives gathered around them.

Once he was gone, Elisa turned to Anton, who smiled at her again.

"I take it you're interested then...In what I have to say?" He asked, raising an eyebrow as the girl swallowed nervously but nodded, looking around to make sure they weren't being watched.

Chuckling his amusement, he reached forward and pulled her towards him and dragged them both behind a couple of large plants to avoid being seen, causing the girl to giggle slightly in anticipation. Once they were hidden, he pressed himself against her and caught her lips in a deep, passionate kiss that was also heated with a hint of danger, making Elisa tremble slightly in his arms. Once he had pulled away, her hands were wrapped around his neck and her cheeks with flushed with both desire and exhilaration.

"God...I think you're a much better kisser than Draco..." She whispered, still slightly shaking.

Anton grinned at that, leaning forward and planting another kiss on her lips. "I know, my love...And for giving into this temptation tonight...I plan to offer you more than just passion...But first things first... Are you in love with my cousin?" He asked, causing the girl to blink in surprise.

"What do you mean?"

"Draco...Are you serious about him? I'm assuming you're not otherwise you would have never agreed to go with me on this little balcony tryst when I had seduced you only an hour ago..." He assumed, raising an eyebrow as he waited for her to confirm it.

She blushed at his directness again but nodded, wrapping herself tighter around him. "I think he's very handsome...And I believe he is serious about me...But no, I am not serious about him." She answered, causing Anton to smirk in triumph.

"I see...So why did you agree to let him escort you to this party?" He pressed further.

"The hunting season is fast approaching...And Draco is one of the most eligible bachelors of the season. He's in running to be named heir, is he not? My mother told me to date him because of that." She explained, making the sneer on Anton's face wider.

"What if I told you...that I could give you that and so much more? What if...I said I could not only give you passion...But I could also give you all the riches that a woman could ever ask for...?" He whispered alluringly into her ear, causing her breath to hitch in her throat.

Anton continued further, pressing their bodies tighter against each other and snaking a hand up to entangle in her lustrous midnight strands. "The Malfoy heir is to be named tomorrow night...I am certain – more than certain – that I will be chosen as the next successor to my family." He told her, a superior and confident smile on his face.

Closing her eyes, Elisa leaned against him as he brushed his lips against her ear, causing a delightful shiver to run down her spine as she listened to his enticing words. "When I am named heir tomorrow... I'll give you the illustrious Malfoy name...as well as the prestige and the fame that goes with it. I'll shower you with jewels and diamonds...With beautiful, lavish gowns, pearls and shoes...Anything you want, I'll give you." He continued, watching with satisfaction as Elisa began to melt from his words.

"Y—Yes...I—"

"What if I told you...That I could give you the world, Elisa?"

Opening her eyes, she looked into his icy blue orbs – biting her lip as his gaze seemed to penetrate deeply into hers, searching into her very soul what she wanted.

The corners of his lips lifted seductively into an inviting smirk, causing her to feel another strong surge of attraction once more just before he caught her lips in another searing kiss that left her breathless and shaking as she tried to voice her thoughts.

“Then I would say with full consent...Take me, Anton...I want to be yours.” She murmured softly, wrapping her arms around him and resting her cheek against his shoulder.

With that, Anton allowed a self-satisfied smirk on his face.

“WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS?!”

The two entangled figures on the bed froze for a long moment as they heard Draco’s enraged growl, causing both figures to crawl out from under the silk blankets and blink up at the blonde’s furious, seething glare.

For a long moment, Draco stared demandingly at the more petite of the two – his eyes filled with a mixture of anger, betrayal, disbelief and most of all – pain, as he looked at her imploringly, hoping for any explanation as to where he found her that next morning– in his cousin’s bedroom entangled with him under the sheets.

After a long moment of him staring silently at her and Elisa fidgeting uncomfortably under his angry, wounded gaze while tucking her hair nervously behind her ear, she finally managed to speak.

“D—Draco...I... I can explain...” She started, wincing when Draco’s eyes had hardened with mockery at her words, scoffing just before he reached down and picked up Elisa’s skirt, hurling it at her naked form in anger.

“Can you?” He mocked sarcastically, sneering when he caught sight of Anton’s amused smile directed at him. The other Malfoy was



leaning back lazily against the bed pillows, his hands tucked behind his head.

Elisa bit her lip and pulled the blankets tighter to cover herself as she tried to speak once more, directing her attention to Draco's furious face.

"Draco... Please don't take this personally. I—"

"Take what personally?! The fact that I brought you here with serious intentions of proposing to you and you slept with my cousin behind my back?! The fact that I introduce you to my family and you humiliate me like this?!" He snapped, causing her to wince again as he turned to look at her in absolute disgust.

Before she could answer him, he spoke again – this time directing his anger towards his smirking cousin. "Judging from the fact that you two had been rather cozy since last night, I figured the reason I had to send you off early to your room after dinner was precisely so you could go off to Anton's room and enjoy yourselves..." He drawled, shaking his head.

When neither of them denied his accusations, he felt another surge of pain and betrayal, furious with himself at his own stupidity at having been the ignorant fool who had fallen right into their game.

Turning to Elisa once more, his eyes narrowed as he trailed his gaze down her disheveled hair, mussed up make-up and slightly red lips, taking in for the first time how he hadn't noticed the evident deceit and dishonesty the sharp features of her beauty exuded.

"And you call yourself a respectable debutante...Sleeping with a guy you had just met...You pathetic little slut."

At this, Elisa had stood up from the bed and drew the blankets tighter around herself as she walked over to him, ignoring the repulsed, pained look that was emanating from his face.

"Draco...Don't take this personally. I...never promised you anything...I...Honestly wasn't aware of how serious you were about

me...The truth was, you never promised me anything either. I didn't know..." She began, trying to grab his hand but Draco flinched in disgust and shoved her away, taking a step back.

She continued, looking back at Anton and briefly noting the slightly disinterested look on the boy's exquisite features. "You have to understand...Anton, he...He promised me the world, Draco. I...I want to be with him." She finished, watching carefully as Draco's face remained nonchalant.

Then, for a brief instant, his eyes had clouded over in deep anguish before they became cold and guarded once more, flashing dark gray before riveting themselves to Anton – who up until that point had chosen to remain silent.

"The world, huh? Who am I to compete with that...?" He mocked again, struggling to maintain his composure as he walked forward until he was looming right over Anton, causing the other boy to finally sit up and meet his gaze with a simple raising of an eyebrow.

"All's fair in love and war...Right, cousin? No hard feelings..." Anton said innocently, giving the other boy a cheerful smile. Draco smiled back, a dangerous glint in his eye that caused even Anton to stiffen in slight trepidation.

"I congratulate you, Anton...You can keep this filthy, deceitful slut. I think you'll find that you two will be very happy together. I, on the other hand, definitely deserve better." He spoke softly, keeping his voice very even. Then, directing another sneer at Elisa, he stalked out of the room in silence, leaving Elisa gaping after him and Anton glaring at his retreating back.

"It gives me great pleasure to introduce my successor and the next, chosen heir of our illustrious Malfoy family – my very own son, Draco Lucius Malfoy!"

The ballroom was filled with a cheerful round of applause and acknowledgment later that night as Draco stepped forward onto the center of the room and accepted the hand offered by his father, giving it a firm shake. Lucius placed a hand proudly on his shoulder and

gestured for him to face the gathered crowd of pureblood families surrounding them, to which Draco nodded to and consented.

Turning to face the crowd, he smirked to see the irate, disbelieving and humiliated expression on Anton's face. Nothing, however, was more satisfying than the look of absolute surprise and deep regret that was etched onto Elisa's face beside him. The hand she had wrapped around Anton's arm had dropped frustratingly as she turned to glare at the other boy, who in turn sneered at her before turning back to glare at Draco in hatred.

Draco simply raised an eyebrow before turning his gaze away and smiling politely at his family just before he began a short and simple speech of gratitude, causing his mother to gush tearfully at him and his father to smile proudly as he watched.

He didn't spare another glance at Anton or Elisa for the rest of the night.

END OF FLASHBACK

"That's...horrible!"

Blaise stopped narrating the story and turned just in time to see Hermione shaking her head in disbelief, her eyes slightly teary as she reached into her bag and pulled out a tissue.

"I can't believe I'd ever feel sorry for Malfoy but what happened to him was just horrible! How could Elisa do something like that to him?" She asked, sniffing as she wiped her eyes but Lorraine sighed and shook her head before answering her.

"Elisa wasn't the only girl Anton managed to steal away from Draco...She was just...Well, the one Draco had been most serious about up until then I suppose. He and Anton have always had a history...Draco's always been the most accomplished son in the entire family, you see...Anton had always been jealous of that." Lorraine finished, looking rather grim.

"You pureblooded families are always making things so complicated. Who knew that to be this rich and prestigious, you have to be a dysfunctional family...?" Hermione blurted out, slightly exasperated and Blaise and Lorraine both laughed, shaking their heads.

"Hey, I disagree Hermione. My family is not as dysfunctional as the Malfoys...And besides, it's not the wealth nor the blood that causes such problems. Every family has dark closets...Don't you think?" He pointed out, smiling at her and causing Hermione to blush in spite of herself.

"I suppose...Oh, I should warn Harry about Anton!" She suddenly realized, attempting to jump out of her seat when Blaise shoved her back down and shook his head fiercely.

"You musn't!" He hissed nervously, looking around the Great Hall to make sure no one was watching them before turning to give Hermione a warning glare.

She looked confused. "Why?"

Blaise sighed and ran a hand through his hair in exasperation. "Because...Draco doesn't want Harry to know what happened. He's warned me about it numerous times...Something about not wanting her to pity him...And that he wants her to choose him over Anton without anything else influencing her decision." He explained, causing Hermione to consider his words.

"That's...admirable...I suppose." She thought out loud, sighing before nodding her agreement.

"Fine...I won't tell her...But Anton had better not hurt her, Lorraine or I will be the one castrating that half-veela jerk." Hermione warned and Lorraine shrugged, giving her a smile.

"Do whatever you like...I've stopped trying to defend my brother's actions long ago." She informed him, causing the Gryffindor to relax.

Before either of them could say anything else, they finally heard the bell ring – causing the students around them to groan noisily before starting to gather their things in preparation for their morning classes.

“Well...Enough about Draco and Harry, Hermione... It would be my pleasure to escort you to our first class this morning...” Blaise started, giving her one of his handsome smiles as he offered her his arm, causing her to blush and nod in agreement.

“Very well...But I promised Viktor he’d escort me to my afternoon classes later so the morning is all I can give you.” She told him, causing the Slytherin to blanch and Lorraine to hide a smirk behind her hand as she watched them leave, sighing before she began to gather her own things as well.

She was about to leave the table when a shadow suddenly appeared in front of her, causing her to look up into three smiling – and rather hideous – males that had stopped in front of her, causing her to immediately stiffen in alarm.

“Yes...?” She asked softly, narrowing her eyes as she inspected their Durmstrang badges and the way their leers lingered up and down her figure.

“Such a beautiful girl such as yourself...We’d like to escort you around the castle, Miss—”

“Malfoy. Lorraine Malfoy.” She spoke scathingly with the usual Malfoy air of superiority, taking a disgusted step back as the middle of the three – a large guy with shaggy brown hair and a slightly crooked nose reached forward to take her hand into his.

“Well then, Miss Malfoy...Don’t be shy...My name is Rickman Worshtire, and if you’ll let me, I’d like to spend some time getting to know you better today.” The guy with the crooked nose said again, giving her a smile and causing Lorraine to wince once more as he caught sight of the bits of food in between his large teeth.

“Ugh...I’m sure you would, Rickman... Listen, I have things to do today so if you don’t mind—”

She was cut off when Rickman had grabbed her arm again, this time rather painfully as he pulled her toward him – causing the two boys behind him to snigger slightly at the nervous expression on her face.

“Let me go!” She hissed, struggling wildly against him but the boy seemed to find her struggling amusing and merely shook his head, looking to his friends with a grin.

“She’s rather feisty, isn’t she? Yes, I think I like her.” He pondered out loud, narrowing his eyes as he let them feast over her slender figure once more.

“And she can’t fight back, like Potter, huh?” One of his friends had kidded, causing all three boys to burst out into hearty laughter.

At this point, Lorraine was already contemplating which option would be better – whether to scream for her brother or for her cousin. Unfortunately, both, at this very moment, were rather far from her location and were not that likely to help her out in this situation.

Fortunately, she didn’t have to decide for very long.

“She said, let her go.”

All three boys – as well as Lorraine – turned at the sound of voice to see Ron Weasley walking over to them with a nasty glare on his face, his wand held tightly in his hand and a threatening sneer on his face.

Rickman snorted in amusement, raising an eyebrow at him.

“Or what? You’ll send Potter on us? Where is your hot best friend anyway? Looks like she’s not here to protect her little Weasel friend, huh? It figures you’d need a girl to protect your sorry arse.” He taunted, sneering at him as Ron’s face grew ominous.

“I’ll take you on any day, Worshtire...Someone as stupid as you probably wouldn’t even know which direction to throw a punch at. Now before Professor Snape sees you harassing one of our

guests...Let her go." He threatened carefully, now aiming his wand carefully at Rickman's growling face.

Lorraine watched, biting her lip in anticipation as the larger boy finally growled as he saw the said Professor looking rather suspiciously at them before he relented and released his grip on Lorraine's arm, immediately causing the girl to move away from him and walk herself over behind Ron.

"What is going on here, Weasley? Don't tell me you're taking a leaf from Potter's book and attempting to ambush our guests?" Professor Snape had drawled as he approached them, causing Ron to step back slightly, putting his wand back into his pocket.

"Nothing, Professor Snape. I was merely informing these three where the bathroom was...They were just about to leave." He answered evenly, watching as the three Durmstrang students growled in response but otherwise turn on their heel and stalk out of the hall in silence.

Professor Snape didn't look convinced and was surprised to see Lorraine hiding behind Ron, his eyes wide as he directed his attention to the blonde girl. "Miss Malfoy...What are you doing behind Mr. Weasley's back? Isn't there somewhere else you have to be...? Or should I send for Draco?" He asked suspiciously, looking back and forth between the two students.

Lorraine shook her head, clearing her throat before speaking. "That's not necessary, Uncle Sev... I'm sure Draco's in class right now and besides, Ronald here was just showing me around school. I'll be alright." She assured him, giving him a sweet smile.

Ignoring the way Ron had cringed at how she had addressed Professor Snape, the Potions Master narrowed his eyes in suspicion but nodded and sent them off, finally causing Ron to turn to her in surprise and amusement once Snape was out of earshot.

"Uncle Sev?! Bloody hell, you call Snape, Uncle Sev?!!" He asked, bursting into hearty laughter as they walked out of the Hall. Lorraine

raised an eyebrow and crossed her arms over her chest as she watched him, leveling him with a glare.

“And if I did...?” She asked, scowling and continuing to watch him laugh as they walked towards the outside of the school towards the terraces, bumping into several familiar students as they passed by.

Ron gave her a rather endearing grin, his shoulders still shaking in laughter and his blue eyes bright with mirth. “It’s bloody hilarious! I never thought that old bat could have any relatives at all.” He mused, stopping just beside the fountain near the school entrance.

Lorraine rolled her eyes, tossing her hair over her shoulder. “Uncle Sev has been a good friend of my family since I could remember... That’s why I’m rather familiar with him.” She explained, looking slightly irritated when Ron had started sniggering at ‘Uncle Sev’ once more.

Once he had recovered from his laughter, the irritated expression on Lorraine’s face vanished into one of a blushing embarrassment as she turned to face him and gave him an uncertain smile. “By the way...Thanks for...back there. I don’t know what I would have done if you hadn’t come and saved me from those jerks.” She spoke softly, blushing darker when Ron met her gaze.

At seeing her smile, the Gryffindor began to blush as well and cleared his throat, turning to look at any other object he could so he could avoid meeting her beautiful gaze.

“Oh...I...Uhm. Th—That was nothing...I saw you were having trouble and I was passing by. Those jerks really shouldn’t even be here in the first place...They’ve been causing trouble since they’ve arrived.” He told her, laughing nervously.

Lorraine nodded, giggling slightly. “Yeah...I can see why. They’re rather hideous...Any girl would be terrified of being approached by them.” She admitted, shuddering and causing Ron to laugh as well, smiling his agreement.



They stared at each other for a long moment before Ron finally coughed awkwardly, causing them both to tear their gaze away from each other in embarrassment, both teenagers blushing profusely as they tried to think of what else to say.

“Anyway...I...Uh...I’d just like to apologize for the way I acted before. You know...When I found out you were a Malfoy. That really wasn’t your fault...I suppose I acted like a jerk then.” Ron finally said, much to her surprise.

Turning to look at him again, she gave him a warm, beautiful smile and nodded her acceptance. “Apology accepted...I also must apologize. I realize it was rather difficult for you to accept something like that given the circumstances...I mean, about you and my cousin being enemies for quite some time now.” She offered, causing Ron to laugh.

“Yeah...Draco and I have been the best of friends since first year.” He kidded, shaking his head in amusement.

She smiled at this, raising her shoulders in a shrug. “Draco’s not that horrible once you get to know him, you know...He’s just rather—”

“Conceited?” Ron supplied bluntly, causing Lorraine to burst into giggles again and Ron to look slightly sheepish at his rather crude answer.

“I’m sorry...For what it’s worth; I’d really like to apologize for my behavior. If you’d like, I’d like to make up for it by taking you for a tour around the grounds this morning...” He offered, smiling at her as she finally stopped giggling.

Lorraine returned his smile easily, nodding her agreement. “I would love that, Ron. But...Don’t you have any morning classes to attend to?” She asked, looking slightly concerned but he shook his head, waving the thought away.

“All my classes are in the afternoon, don’t worry. It’s usually Harr—sorry, Jaimee and Hermione who have classes in the morning and I usually blow off some time in the Gryffindor common room around

this time while waiting. Unless of course, you have something to do...?" He asked, looking expectantly at her.

Lorraine shook her head, giving him a reassuring grin. "No, of course not. Up until awhile ago, I thought I had to endure the company of those Durmstrang thugs but thanks to you, I'm free...So it's the least you could do by touring me around Hogwarts." She told him, a slightly flirtatious tone in her voice that caused Ron's ears to blush in nervousness.

"R—Right...Well then, let's—"

He never got to finish his sentence as he had ended up turning and walking right into the fountain's ledge, causing him to curse rather loudly before falling backwards directly into the fountain's running water with a loud and clumsy splash that drew the attention of everyone around them in surprise.

Damn it! Lady killer Ronald Weasley does it again! He snapped at himself in his head, thoroughly embarrassed as Lorraine gaped and ran to him in concern, obviously trying to hold back her hearty laughter as she offered a hand to help him out.

"A—Are you okay, Ron?" She managed ask, covering her mouth with her other hand to squelch her laughter as she heard the hearty sniggers of all the other students around them.

Ron glared at her offered hand for a minute. A rather mischievous idea popped into his head as he stared at her giggling form and he nodded, taking her hand before grinning and yanking her right into the fountain with him, causing her to squeal in surprise as she landed next to him in an ungraceful splash.

When she had recovered from her initial shock, she turned to him in anger, her blue eyes flashing as she watched him struggling to contain his own laughter now.

"Ronald Weasley, this has got to be the most ungentlemanly thing a guy has ever done to me, I'll have you know! I can't believe—"

She stopped when she saw the bright twinkling in his blue eyes and the warmth of his smile, finally causing her to relent and roll her eyes before joining in his laughter and splashing him playfully with the clear water.

“Jerk! You look like an idiot!” She teased, giggling again as she took in the rather scandalized looks and whispers of the debutantes, as well as bachelors around them who had witnessed the scene.

Ron began splashing her back, laughing as well and admiring the way Lorraine looked even more beautifully – if that was even possible – in the water.

“You...look as gorgeous as ever.”

He was surprised at the words that had come from his mouth but just as Lorraine recovered from the blush that had started to grow on her pale cheeks, Ron had smirked evilly and began splashing her again, causing her to squeal in amusement and eventually join in, laughing harder than she could ever remember she had in her life.

A/N: Before anything else, I need to get it out. DEATH TO ELISA!!!! :throws a flurry of knives and bombs: Okay, I'm fine now. Hehe. So sorry... that chapter had more Ron/Lorraine fluff than the main pairing but I promise more Draco/Harry fluff in the next one. In fact, I dedicated all of the next chapter to some much-needed Draco/Harry goodness so be sure to read it! :wink: As always, be a dear and don't forget to drop me a REVIEW, alright? Mwah! Toodles!

## Chapter 15 - Maybe

Slapping a hand irritatingly to her forehead, Harry watched for the umpteenth time as Neville bowed rather uncertainly to the enchanted mannequin before shakily taking the mannequin's hand into his and proceeding to guide it into a clumsy waltz.

She watched, wincing every now and then when she caught sight of Neville stepping onto the mannequin's foot and tripping every now and then amidst the elegant beat of the music, causing Jaimee to groan to herself and check her watch in dismay.

It's 11PM...We've been in this damn classroom for three hours and he still doesn't know how to dance properly! She thought to herself in frustration, sighing and shaking her head in exhaustion.

At this rate, I'm never going to get a good night's sleep. She thought, longingly imagining herself lying down on her four-poster bed and snuggling into her pillows.

"Harry? How am I doing?" Came Neville's nervous voice as he stopped dancing and turned to look at the girl in question, biting his lip as he took in the frustration clearly etched onto her beautiful face.

Jaimee shook her head and covered her annoyance with an encouraging smile as she walked over to him and carefully chose her words lest she shatter the boy's self-confidence even more.

"Well...To be honest, Neville...I really do think you've got the potential to be a great dancer. It's just that...Something's making you nervous and making you stumble around so much like that. I'm not sure what that is..." She let her voice trail off and raised an expectant eyebrow at him.

Neville blushed at her inquiry, nodding in mild shame. "Actually, there is... I keep thinking about how the debutante ball is tomorrow night and how I'll be dancing with you, Jaimee... People have been saying that you're the prime of this hunting season...And that makes me completely nervous." He admitted, laughing at himself.

Jaimee sighed and flicked her wand once to stop the music before walking over to him, giving him a firm but otherwise reassuring look. "First of all, Neville...Stop thinking of me as Jaimee, okay? It's Harry. Just Harry. If you keep thinking of me as Jaimee, you'll only agitate yourself more. Second... Tomorrow is the debutante ball and we've got to get you in shape till then, alright? You have to pull yourself together." She told him, waiting for him to nod before she continued.

"Now, I promised you that by the end of this night, you'd be fine. So we're going to try this again... Only this time, you won't be dancing with the mannequin." She flicked her wand again, causing the music to start up once more in a slightly more upbeat tune.

She offered him her hand, raising an eyebrow as he took it nervously and positioned them into a dancing stance. "Good...Now, relax Neville...You're only dancing with me, alright? It's not Jaimee...Not even Luna...It's just Harry." She told him, giving him a smile before she began to lead them both into a waltz, wincing when Neville had immediately stepped onto her foot.

"I'm sorry, Harry!" He rushed out but Jaimee shook her head and indicated for him to keep dancing as she continued to lead him amidst the music.

When he stepped onto her foot for the third time, Jaimee finally stopped for a minute as an idea popped into her head. She raised a hand, indicating for him to wait a couple of moments while she turned around and began adjusting her long black hair.

Neville looked at her in confusion, watching as she tied her hair into a high ponytail on top of her head and brushed aside her bangs, exposing the well-known lightning bolt scar that remained unchanged despite Harry's transformation.

"There...Neville, while we dance, I want you to focus on my scar...Alright? Can you do that?" She asked him, causing him to give her a weird look but otherwise nod his agreement.

She grinned at him, pointing to her forehead once more. "Focus on this scar and imagine that you're dancing with me when I was still a

guy...Alright?" She added further, causing Neville's shoulder's to shake slightly in mirth as he imagined the scene.

Jaimee laughed at the mental image as well but nodded, offering her hand to him once more. "Precisely, Neville... That's all there is to it. It's funny. It's amusing...You're dancing with Harry Potter, the boy-who-lived. It's not something to be nervous about; it's something to laugh about. Now come on, let's get started." She urged, smiling as Neville finally grinned as he took her hand in his and began leading her into an easy waltz.

After a few moments, Jaimee smiled as she noticed Neville's shoulders loosen and his movements become more controlled and graceful – the amused smile all the while still on his face as he guided her around the room in an easy, elegant dance.

"That's it, Neville...You're doing wonderfully. Even Ron would dance with you." Harry kidded, causing the boy's shoulders to shake in mirth again as he pondered the image before he turned and spun Jaimee around in a graceful twirl and caught her in his arms once more, making her smirk at him in approval.

"Not bad...Maybe that Ron image inspired you." She teased, causing Neville to shoot her a scathing glare. Jaimee to smirked wider and laughed at his expression, shaking her head.

After several more moments, Jaimee decided to take the level a notch higher and nudged Neville lightly, drawing the boy's attention to her. "Alright... Let's make this slightly more challenging. Now...Imagine I'm Luna..." She began and immediately, Neville's face turned a dark red and he stumbled over his own feet, missing a dance step and stepping onto Jaimee's left foot.

Instead of getting angry, she laughed and she stopped them both to raise her wand, flicking it over her ears. Neville blinked, watching as a pair of radish earrings appeared and hung themselves over them, reminding him of the pair of earrings Luna always had on.

"Harry, what—?"

“Don’t imagine I’m Luna...Imagine I’m Loony Lovegood...The strange girl who wears radish earrings in order to protect herself from...I don’t know...Let’s say sugar pixies or something.” Jaimee mused, rolling her eyes as Neville laughed to himself.

“Look at my earrings and just think of that whenever you start to get nervous...Alright? Let’s try it again...” She said, waiting as Neville gathered them into position and began leading her into another dance, his footsteps light and easy as they swayed around the empty classroom.

“Why Neville, you’re a very good dancer. Be careful...I hear the sugar pixies are out to steal people’s shoes now, you better keep a close watch on yours.” Jaimee murmured in a deadpan imitation of Luna, causing Neville to freeze and consider nervously what he was to say next.

Watching Jaimee point to her earrings, he followed her gaze and relaxed, allowing himself to smile as he chose his response. “Thank you, Luna...I’ll keep that in mind. I’m rather fond of these shoes.” He told her, chuckling in amusement.

Letting out a sigh of relief, Jaimee finally smiled as she observed Neville’s relaxed and carefree movements, indicating for her that it was probably time to call it a night and get some sleep. After about a couple more minutes of dancing and twirling, she finally spoke up, glancing at her watch.

“Wonderful, Neville...I think we’re pretty much ready for tomorrow night, huh?” She said, stopping and flicking her wand for the last time to stop the music echoing in the classroom before turning and giving him a smile, which he gratefully returned.

“Yeah...I think I am...Thank you, Harry. This really means a lot to me...I know you’re rather busy so I’m sorry if I was a bit of a difficult tutee.” He said but she rolled her eyes and waved his apology away, looking amused.

“Don’t mention it, Longbottom...Now...Tomorrow, when you get ready for the debutante ball...Don’t forget the things I told you,

alright? Always smile – or even smirk, that works too – and keep your chin up with an air of confidence. Don't ever look down and don't ever look embarrassed, girls hate that." She told him, grinning as Neville nodded and tried to take it all in.

"More importantly, when you escort me into the Great Hall tomorrow night... Keep your gaze up and meet everyone else's smile, alright? I'm sure they'll be hundreds of people watching... It wouldn't be right for you to be looking down the entire time when we enter the Hall." She added, much to his nervousness as he gulped and nodded.

She smiled and reached over to punch him lightly on the shoulder, giving him a reassuring grin. "Relax...It'll be fine, don't worry. They're just a pack of idiots, it's nothing to be nervous about." She assured him, patting his hand before continuing.

"Also... Don't forget the tips I gave you on how to present yourself tomorrow. The debutante ball actually has a theme for the debutantes so we'll have to be wearing costume – inspired gowns...The guys, however, are just required to wear formal. Don't forget...Hair wax, aftershave and a stylish but simple and neatly cleaned suit. If I remember correctly, girls like guys who are neat and take care of their appearance." She told him, giving him a smirk.

At this point, Neville managed to return the smirk, a mischievous glint in his eyes directed at her. "Is that why you like Malfoy?" He teased, causing Jaimee to sputter in indignation and shoot him a ferocious glare.

"What?! I do not like Malfoy! Who told you that?!" She growled, her eyes flashing but Neville was whistling innocently as he began to walk out of the classroom with an innocent smile on his face.

Growling, she watched as Neville thanked her again and waved gaily at her before walking out of the classroom with a rather cheerful smile on his face, leaving her staring after him and growling in irritation at his last comment.

Then, sighing, she grabbed her bag, slinging it over her shoulder. Looking back, she made sure the classroom was back in order before



she finally left as well – closing the door carefully behind her and making her way back towards her private rooms. She was just about to round the corner to her hallway when she quickly made another decision and set forward towards the Astronomy tower, shoving her hands into her jacket pockets.

I just hope no one disturbs me this time... She thought, glancing at her watch again and noting that it was nearly midnight and it could be expected that everyone was asleep by now.

She whistled softly to herself as she made her way up the steps to the tower, pausing every now and then to check behind her to make sure no one was following her. Once she had made it to the tower, she shut the door silently behind her and leaned against it for a minute, closing her eyes for a couple of minutes.

How am I ever going to handle tomorrow night...? She thought to herself, feeling completely drained and exhausted as she dropped her bag and let herself sink into a fetal position on the floor, hugging her knees to her chest and leaning her forehead against them in dismay.

It was easy for me to tell Neville how to get through tomorrow night...But how am I going to make it through the debutante ball alive? She thought furiously, shaking her head and clenching her hands into tight fists.

Holding back a groan, she thought about how excited Hermione and all of the girls were when they had gushed about the upcoming ball tomorrow night – and how much they were looking forward to wearing their beautiful ball gowns in front of all their suitors.

Wincing, she recalled the rather extravagant, silk gown Sirius had ordered made for her just for this occasion and the encouraging smile her godfather had given her when he handed it to her, assuring her that he would have someone over before the ball to help her get dressed so she needn't worry about anything.

The truth was, Harry had never been more worried in her life. A couple of months ago, she wasn't even involved in this entire thing at

all...Now she was caught up in this game of courtship, deceit and tradition that she couldn't even recognize herself anymore.

Am I still Harry? Or am I turning to somebody else? She thought, taking a deep breath as she stood up and walked over to one of the room's enchanted mirrors to survey her reflection once more. Reaching up to unclasp the tie around her hair, she watched as her midnight black strands cascaded gently down past her shoulders, framing her pale face and contrasting beautifully with her glowing green eyes.

She looked at her reflection uncertainly, searching for any remaining traces of the person she had once been in the features of this beautiful...stranger...She saw in front of her. Her eyebrows fused together in dismay as she reached up and caressed her own cheek, trailing a finger down to trace her lips.

She watched as her eyes widened and peered closer to inspect the emerald green orbs framed by the long flirty lashes of her eyes. Feeling a surge of anger at what she saw, she tore her gaze away and leaned back against the mirror once more, her eyes downcast.

"You're very beautiful."

Jaimee froze, her eyes narrowing slowly as she recognized the soft voice that had spoken instantly and looked up to see Draco watching her silently from where he sat by the window ledge, a tender look in his eyes as they rested on her quivering form.

She sat up immediately and yanked her jacket tighter against herself in an instinctively protective gesture, causing Draco to chuckle in amusement as he got up as well and walked over to her slowly, noting her tense figure.

"I'm sorry...I should have made my presence known sooner. I wasn't expecting company at this time of night." He offered, one corner of his lips lifting into a small smirk as he stopped in front of her, peering down at her glaring face in mild curiosity.

She continued to glare at him, her eyes narrowed and her lips twisted into an unwelcoming sneer. "What are you doing here, Malfoy? Don't you have anything else better to do than to go around stalking people?" She snapped, causing him to clench his jaw in annoyance as he stepped back and matched her glare with his own.

"I happen to be Head Boy, Potter...So I actually have a right to be here at this time. You, on the other hand, do not...So I think it's you who needs to explain herself. Not me. Otherwise, I'm going to have to take off house points...you wouldn't want that, would you?" He retorted arrogantly, causing her to flush in humiliation as she realized his point.

"That's really none of your concern, Malfoy. I don't have to explain myself to the likes of you. I don't care if you take off as many house points as you like...I've grown tired of your games long ago." Harry snapped, still sneering at him.

She would have managed to walk past him had Draco not grabbed her arm and spun her around to face him, causing her to scowl in annoyance and struggle wildly with him in protest.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?! Let me go!" She growled, struggling harder but Draco didn't seem to be listening as he gave her a strange look, his eyes uncertain as he voiced the thoughts that seemed to be circling in them.

"Potter...Do you really like...Anton?" He asked, immediately causing Jaimee to stop and gape stupidly at him in shock and bewilderment.

"Wh—What?"

The question had been croaked out but Draco seemed to understand as he sighed and leaned back against the mirror behind them and closed his eyes much like she had awhile ago, looking slightly worn out as he continued to speak.

"I...Do you like Anton? I know you've been spending a lot of time with him these past couple of days...Do you like him?" He asked again, opening his eyes and watching her reaction.

Jaimee was still sputtering slightly as she tried to gather a suitable response, looking at him with a confused expression on her face. “I—I don’t know, Draco...I... I haven’t thought about any of that at all. To be honest, this entire season has been nothing but confusing as hell for me... I have no idea what I’m supposed to do...How I’m supposed to act...What I’m supposed to say...I’ve been nothing but a joke.” She responded softly, looking away and failing to see how Draco’s facial expression had softened at her words.

“I’m sorry...”

She looked up at him and saw him giving her a genuinely guilty look, his eyes shameful as they carefully dropped onto the floor. “It’s all my fault you’re going through all this. I truly am sorry...It was never my intention to put you through this mess...” He began, sighing as he slid down the mirror until he was sitting on the floor.

“Like I said before... I...I’ve been completely selfish. It never occurred to me that you might be needing some time to get used to everything that’s changed...I know that now. That’s why I’ve been keeping more of a safe distance...I wanted to give you more space to get to know yourself more.” He admitted, shooting her a half-hearted smile.

She tried to return it but failed miserably and instead, sat herself down against the wall across from him and watched him silently as he continued to speak.

“That was also a mistake, I suppose...When I did that, Anton seemed to swoop right in and began to claim you for himself. I won’t lie to you, Harry... I hate him with a purpose...But I think it’s better if you learned for yourself why.” He told her, much to her frustration.

“Malfoy, just what are you trying to tell me?” She finally demanded, her eyes flashing as she looked at him with accusation in her eyes.

Draco looked at her with an intense gaze, his eyes dark and unreadable.

“I’ve told you before, Harry...I want you to choose me. I can make you happy...I can respect you the way no one else can. I—”

“STOP!”

Jaimee stood up, putting her hands over her ears in an attempt to drown his words out. Once he had stopped talking, she set her hands down and glared angrily at him, shaking her head in disbelief and disgust at his words.

“How much pain and humiliation will you put me through before you’re satisfied, Malfoy? Are you not happy with having turned me into a bloody woman already? Do you have to play with my head too...? Do you think it’s amusing to play with my feelings like that?” She asked in a soft whisper, causing Draco’s eyes to cloud over.

“I’m not trying to play with your feelings! I’m—”

“You’re just like all the other stupid suitors out there who are only after the prestige and success of winning over the savior of the Wizarding World as a wife. Wasn’t that what you and your father had made clear to me the day you had me turned into a woman?” She drawled, causing Draco to wince at the memory.

“Harry, that was—”

But Jaimee wasn’t listening anymore as she spun on her heel and had attempted to walk out of the room, only to stop in shock as she attempted to twist the doorknob again, her eyes widening when the door simply refused to open.

“Crap...This can’t be happening.” She muttered under her breath as she took out her wand and pointed it over the door.

“Alohomora!”

Biting her lip, she reached over and turned the knob again. Then, with wide furious eyes she slowly turned around to meet Draco’s nonchalant, otherwise smirking face.

“What time is it?”

Glancing at her watch, her eyes widened before she answered him, causing the Head Boy to cringe again at seeing the silent, demanding query in her eyes.

“It’s...1AM...Why?”

Draco stood up and walked over to the door, flicking his wand several times at it using the different unlocking spells he knew before attempting to open it once more. It continued to remain locked, causing the boy to sigh and shake his head in dismay.

“It’s no good. We’re locked in. All Hogwarts classrooms magically lock themselves by 1AM...It’s sort of a protection charm set by the Headmaster since we have visitors this hunting season...It won’t unlock until morning.” He explained, causing Jaimee’s eyes to widen as she looked at him in alarm.

“You mean I’m stuck here with you until morning?!” She blurted out, causing the Slytherin to raise an eyebrow at her expression.

“In a manner of speaking.” He drawled, smirking when Jaimee immediately shoved him away from her and positioned herself in a far corner of the room, wrapping her jacket tighter around her body and holding her wand tightly in her hand.

“I—I’m warning you! Don’t try anything on me or I swear, I’ll kick your arse! From this moment on, you’ll stay on that side of the room and I’ll stay on this side...Don’t come near me!” She threatened darkly, pointing her wand at him to emphasize her point.

Draco looked thoroughly amused and looked as though he was trying to hold back laughter as he nodded and sat himself in the corner opposite hers, leaning against the wall and contenting himself with watching her from where he sat.

After a long moment of Jaimee glancing at him suspiciously every now and then and Draco watching her with a smirk, she finally

exploded and turned to glare at his chuckling form. She stood up and walked over to him, looming over him as she spoke.

“Will you stop staring at me, Malfoy?! It’s creeping me out! If we’re going to be here for the rest of the night, you will keep your bloody hands AND eyes to yourself! Is that understood?!” She yelled at him, growling furiously.

The smirk never wavered from his face as he stood up easily and towered over her instead, causing her to step back slightly in intimidation. “And what about my mouth?” He asked, his voice in a low, seductive whisper as he stepped toward her and wrapped his arms around her slender waist.

“Wh—What are you doing?! I’m warning you...I won’t hold back if you harass me, Malfoy!” She stammered, struggling against him as he leaned forward until their lips were only inches apart, immediately causing Jaimee to stiffen and close her eyes in anticipation.

It never came, however, as after a long moment, she opened one bleary eye to see him still smirking at her and shaking his head in amusement before releasing her and nodding, walking over to the far corner once more and settling himself down.

Jaimee watched, her eyes wide with disbelief as Draco gave her a saucy wink before pulling out a book from one of the nearby bookshelves and beginning to read using the tip of his wand as light, leaving the Gryffindor to her own thoughts.

Looking at him as though he was crazy, she finally sighed before walking over to her own corner and plopping back down, leaning against the wall and wrapping her arms around herself.

The two teenagers were silent for about an hour after that and the only sound that filled the room was the soft crinkling of the pages Draco turned every now and then. After several more minutes, Jaimee finally lost it and shifted her position so that she was lying on her back and staring up at the enchanted ceiling of stars and constellations.

Aside from the privacy, one of the other reasons she loved staying in the Astronomy tower at night was precisely because she loved to look up into its magic ceiling which had been set to depict all of the stars and constellations regardless of what month it was.

She wasn't much of an astronomy person but she loved looking up at the stars and there were countless times she had simply stayed up there all night, looking up at them and watching them swirl above her head.

Sighing softly, she looked up and began silently counting them in her head in an effort to lull herself to sleep; unaware that Draco had stopped reading his book and was looking at her from across the room with a small curious smile on his face.

"Which one is your favorite...?"

Blinking, she sat up for a minute and looked at him in surprise before answering his question.

"Favorite what? Star or constellation?" She asked, raising an eyebrow.

He shrugged and set his book down, looking up at the enchanted ceiling. "Either one...Which one is your favorite?" He asked, looking back at her and giving her a smile.

Jaimee blushed at seeing his handsome smile directed at her and leaned back down again, resting her head against her palms and watching as the millions of stars swirled above her.

"I don't really know much about stars...So I can't be sure...But I've always liked the constellation Hydrus...If only for the reason that I like snakes." She answered, chuckling softly. Turning to look at him, she gave him a smile as well and raised an eyebrow.

"What about you? Do you have a favorite constellation?" She asked, watching as Draco smirked and nodded, peering up once more and pointing to a constellation in the center of the ceiling.



“Naturally, I’m inclined to choose the constellation Draco as my favorite...Considering that I was practically conceived under it.” He told her, shuddering to himself and causing Jaimee to laugh at the expression on his face.

He smiled at hearing her laughter, watching as her eyes sparkled with mirth before she turned to look up at the ceiling once more, sighing contentedly. “Is that why they named you, Draco?” She asked curiously, a small smile on her face.

Slowly, he edged himself closer over to where she was lying down, cautiously gauging her reaction as he carefully positioned himself to lie down next to her, both of them staring up at the ceiling with rather dreamy looks on their faces.

When the Gryffindor didn’t seem to protest at his nearness, he smiled to himself and tucked his hands behind his head, staring contentedly at the stars before answering.

“Yes. My father loves astronomy; you see...We have dozens of telescopes at home. He and my mother decided to name me after their favorite constellation... The same one they made sure they saw on their wedding night.” Draco made a face again and Jaimee couldn’t help but grin at the thought, her shoulders shaking in hilarity.

“I see... I think that’s actually rather interesting...I always thought your parents just named you Draco because you were a monster.” She teased, causing him to growl in response – further eliciting more laughs from the girl as his reaction had confirmed her assumption.

When he caught the amusement of the situation, he allowed himself to chuckle as well, shaking his head and reaching up to point at the collection of stars before speaking.

“Did you know that all of the stars have their own individual myths? I’m actually fond of stars myself so I’ve read up on several interesting stories about them.” He told her, turning to give her a wry grin.

Jaimee looked slightly interested as she turned and met his gaze briefly before looking up once more, nodding her understanding.

“Really...? Like what?” She asked, looking thoughtful as she pondered his next words.

Draco pointed to one of the stars, tracing it briefly with his finger. “The star Algol, for example...It was known to be the eye of the mythical Gorgon, Medusa...” He began, causing the corner of Jaimee’s lips to quirk slightly upwards.

“Historically, it was the Greeks who fathomed that the heavens were actually a giant dome made entirely of bronze on which the constellations were positioned onto. As you can see...” Draco stopped and raised a hand again, directing her gaze to the one star at the very center of the ceiling.

“That star is known as the pole star or heavenly axis... It’s the central point from which all the other constellations revolve around...Draco, Ursa Major and Minor are the three closest ones to it.” He said softly, indicating the three mentioned constellations.

Jaimee smiled as she listened to his soft yet firm, assertive voice, noting once more how naturally intelligent Draco was and how she had failed to notice it until now.

Interpreting her silence as boredom, Draco looked slightly embarrassed and immediately set his hand back down, glancing at her expression. “I’m sorry...I’m beginning to bore you, aren’t I? I’ll stop.” He looked rather sheepish but Harry shook her head and gestured for him to continue, giving him a reassuring nod.

“No, don’t...I was actually just thinking about how this is one of the rare intelligent conversations I’ve ever had with you...And how I realized that you’re actually not as stupid as I thought you were.” She drawled teasingly, causing him to smirk in response at her quip.

“I wasn’t chosen as head boy simply for being drop dead gorgeous, Potter.” He kidded, causing her to roll her eyes and punch him lightly on the arm.

“Go on, continue...I hate to say it but I’m actually interested in what you have to say.” She told him, causing the Slytherin to grin once

more before turning back to the ceiling and stroking his chin in thought.

“Actually...Another one of my favorite constellations is Hydrokhoos...He’s pretty popular among the muggles if I’m not mistaken.” Draco mused out loud but Jaimee shook her head as she pondered her lack of familiarity with the name.

“I’ve never heard of him.”

“I believe he’s more popularly recognized as the water bearer, Aquarius.” He told her, causing her eyes to widen in realization as he continued. “He was named after a handsome Trojan prince named Ganymedes...Zeus had sent an eagle owl to seize him and bring him up to the heavens to become the cup-bearer of the gods. Eventually, he and the eagle were placed in the sky as Aquila and Aquarius.” He explained further, his eyebrows fused in thought.

“Was he that handsome?” Jaimee asked, smirking and at her teasing tone of voice, Draco turned and matched her smirk with his own, causing hers to falter slightly.

“Don’t worry, love...I’m pretty sure I can defend myself should some Roman God decide to send an eagle off to capture me too.” He told her, chuckling as he was once again rewarded with another painful punch to the shoulder.

“Don’t push it, Malfoy.”

Draco grinned and pointed to another pair of constellations, drawing Jaimee’s attention back to the ceiling. “Scorpius and Orion...Scorpius was actually a giant scorpion sent by the earth goddess Gaia to kill Orion. Eventually, they were also placed onto the sky as constellations... What’s interesting about them, however, is that you’ll never see them sharing the same sky.” He told her.

“What about that one?” She asked, pointing to another nearby collection of stars above their heads. Draco squinted at it for a minute before nodding

“Cygnus, the swan...I’m not entirely sure about the myth behind this one...But I believe it had something to do with the fact that the swan was actually Cionus, the son of Neptune. He was attacked by the great warrior Achilles and to save him, Neptune had him immortalized as a swan.” He mused, answering her query.

She nodded in understanding, before turning to give him an exasperated look. “How do you know all of these things, Malfoy? Is there anything you don’t know? Like how the stars are formed or something...?” She asked and to her surprise, Draco just smirked and shrugged.

“I like reading a lot during my spare time...Mind you, I’m not like Granger. I don’t study. I actually read for fun. For some reason...Information just gets absorbed into my head and stays there.” He admitted, causing her to scowl in annoyance.

Looking amused at the expression on her face, he continued to speak, feeling a slight headache as he tried to look clearly up at the stars once more. “And to answer your question, yes I do know how the stars are formed. Would you like the scientific explanation or the mythical one?” He asked her, turning to give her a wry smile.

Jaimee raised an eyebrow, giving him a teasing smile before answering. “Alright...I’ll take curtain number one, please.” She replied easily but at Draco’s confused look, she briefly remembered that he wasn’t aware of muggle puns and corrected herself hastily.

“I mean...I’d like to know the scientific explanation first...” She added, rolling her eyes fondly as Draco nodded and paused for a minute to gather his thoughts.

“The main agent in any star formation is gravity...Or to be more specific, gravity instability within a molecular cloud. This is usually caused by previous star explosions or supernova or even the collision of nearby galaxies. In any case, once this gravitational condition reaches sufficient density, it collapses under the strength of its own force. Eventually, particles of gas and dust form what is known to be bok globules. As these further collapse and density further increases—”

“Alright, alright! You’ve made your point!” Jaimee interrupted, shaking her head as Draco stopped and gave her an amused smirk.

“Merlin...You’re a nerd in disguise, Malfoy.” She commented, rolling her eyes and causing him to chuckle once more.

“I prefer to think of myself as a genius, Potter.” He corrected her and at the superior tone of his voice, Jaimee relented and smiled at him.

“Yeah...Whatever...Why don’t you tell me the star’s mythical origins then? I’m sure that will prove to be more interesting than the foreign language you just spoke awhile ago.” She teased, failing to notice Draco blinking in an attempt to focus as his headache began to become painful.

“Very well...To be honest, there are a number of mythical origins about the stars. Some believe that they were actually the children of the sun and the moon...And that the sun liked to eat them, explaining why they disappeared whenever he was around. Another rather popular belief is that the stars are actually the souls of the dead or of the gods, which was why they were named after them.” He began, his voice beginning to slur as he struggled to maintain consciousness.

“That’s rather naïve of them to believe, don’t you think? So they actually believed that every time a person died, he or she became one of the stars?” She asked incredulously.

Draco failed to respond, however, as he finally sat up and pinched the bridge of his nose in an effort to sooth his splitting headache, finally causing Jaimee to turn and look at him in concern, noting the pained expression on his face.

“M—Malfoy? Are you okay? You don’t look so good...” She noted carefully, watching as Draco took in a deep breath and massaged his temples for a moment. She watched as he finally turned to look at her, a rather strange expression and glint in his eyes as he crawled himself closer towards her lying form on the floor.

At that, she stiffened and backed away from him in alarm, hastily struggling to search for her wand at the same time. “S-Stay back! I’m warning you, Malfoy! Don’t try anything funny with me! Don’t think just because we’re talking like this that I’ve let my guard down!” She stammered, watching as he continued to crawl towards her, the strange, unreadable glint still in his eyes.

“Harry...I...” He stopped midsentence as he managed to back her into a nearby wall, noting her suspicious, slightly nervous eyes and the way she was currently hugging herself for protection.

“I said stay back, Malfoy! Or I swear, I’m going to hurt you!” She warned again although the force of her threat was taken down several levels at the slight cracking of her voice.

Draco began his advance again, reaching a hand out towards her. Biting back a loud, girly shriek, she struggled as the Slytherin finally collapsed on top of her, pinning her struggling form to the floor and causing her to yell out several protests as she tried to push him off of her.

“Malfoy! What the bloody hell do you think you’re doing?! How could even think of doing something like that in such a place?! Get off me before I scream rape! Get off!” She screamed loudly, managing to punch him away and shove him onto his side before jumping onto her feet and away from him as though he was on fire – which ironically wasn’t far from the truth.

“Draco...?”

She blinked in surprise as she noted how the Slytherin hadn’t struggled but was now shivering rather violently where she had left him on the floor. He was hugging himself as his facial features were pale and were etched into a wince of pain, indicating to the Gryffindor that he probably had not meant to rape her.

Looking slightly sheepish, she knelt down beside him and briefly touched her palm to his forehead, immediately pulling it back as she was met with a burning heat.

“Merlin, you’re burning up... Why didn’t you say something sooner, you idiot?” She admonished, biting her lip in thought before she stood up and began shutting all the windows of the classroom, feeling ashamed of herself and foolish for having thought he was going to do anything to her.

Coughing slightly, he sounded highly irritated as he answered her. “I can’t believe you punched me...What did you think I was going to do, Potter? You’re even more perverted than I am.” He snapped, shivering again and rubbing his hands over his arms to get warm.

Jaimee glared at him from where she was attempting to make a fire in the fireplace, her eyes narrowing in annoyance. “Well I probably would have interpreted you better if you hadn’t come at me looking like a bloody serial rapist!” She retorted, managing to create a small, cozy fire before walking back over to him.

Then, sighing, she bent down and carefully helped him to stand up, supporting his weight as she brought him closer to the fire. “Come on...You obviously have a fever...It’s better if you stay near the fire.” She said gently, her facial features softening as she touched his flaming skin once more.

Draco nodded wordlessly and let her position him back carefully onto the floor where she knelt beside him and began to remove her jacket, using it as a blanket to wrap around his upper body in an effort to stop him from shivering.

He looked worried at that and opened his eyes to look at her in question. “Won’t you get cold...?” He asked, his eyebrows fusing together but Jaimee shook her head and gave him a reassuring smile.

“Don’t worry...I’m used to the cold. Well, more than you perhaps...It seems that every time I see you, you’re always getting yourself sick, Malfoy.” She teased, causing Draco’s cheeks to color slightly in embarrassment.

“I know...I’m sorry...” He replied before he was overcome by a round of coughing, causing Jaimee to stand up and walk over to her bag. After rifling through it for a moment, she walked back over to him and

knelt back down near his head, allowing him to see the small bottle of water she carried and the small box of medicine in her hands.

“What’s that...?” He asked, his eyes narrowing but Jaimee rolled her eyes and gave him an amused smile. “It’s just muggle medicine, Draco...Don’t worry. It’s not going to poison you.” She drawled, lifting his head up to rest against her thighs as she offered the small tablet against his mouth.

“Muggle medicine?! But who knows what those things could do to me, I—”

“We don’t really have much of a choice right now, Draco...So you could either choose to drink this and make both our lives easier or suffer through with a high fever for the rest of the night.” Harry interrupted him, giving him an irritated but otherwise firm glare, which the Slytherin returned with one of his own.

Looking suspiciously at the medicine, Draco raised an eyebrow before he finally sighed and opened his mouth to accept the tablet, allowing her to help him drink from the bottle of water she offered. After he had swallowed the medicine, he took a deep breath and lay back down against her lap, closing his eyes.

“I’m sure you’ll feel better in the morning...For now, try to get some rest. Don’t worry...I’ll watch over you and make sure your fever is taken care of.” She promised him, reaching up and once again, undoing the scarf around her neck only to tie it securely around his, caressing the strands of silver blonde hair out of his eyes as she did.

Still slightly shivering, Draco forced his eyes open and looked up at her beautiful face, feeling a warm surge of contentment in the pit of his stomach as he snuggled himself into her jacket, breathing in her sweet scent.

“Harry—”

“Shh...It’s alright. We’ll talk in the morning...Get some sleep.” She whispered gently to him, leaning down and surprising both him and



herself by placing a soft, tender kiss on his forehead and stroking his cheek.

At the affectionate gesture, Draco began to close his eyes, his heart bouncing in his chest. Then, finally allowing himself to be lulled into drowsiness, he took another deep breath and snuggled deeper against her lap, a small smile resting on his features as he began to fall into a deep sleep.

Jaimee couldn't prevent the rather gentle smile on her face as she watched the Slytherin sleep, noting how perfectly angelic he looked without the perpetual Malfoy smirk on his handsome face. He looked almost innocent – something she found incredibly endearing. She smiled again and caressed his cheek, running her fingers through his soft hair.

His hair is so soft and silky...It's almost like a girl's...She thought in amusement, shaking her head as she continued to play with the lustrous strands, causing him to shift slightly in his sleep but otherwise snuggle against her jacket, his breathing even.

Why did I kiss him...? She admonished herself, shaking her head in embarrassment as she recalled how she had bent her head down and gave him a kiss on his forehead. The gesture had seemed like the perfect thing to do at the time. She hadn't really thought about it when she done it. It just happened.

Sighing, she turned and stared into the fire, admiring the way the flames danced gracefully around the fireplace.

What do I feel about Draco?

The question had been plaguing her the minute she had allowed him to lie down next to her when they had fallen into their rather soothing conversation about stars and constellations – something she had never expected when she found out she was would be locked in with him for the entire night.

It was strange but she found that she had loved listening to the sound of his voice and that it comforted her somehow, making her feel safe and completely at peace with herself in his presence. More importantly, she felt more like herself –like Harry Potter – when she was with him and that thought alone both scared and excited her.

Am I falling in love with him? She thought, turning back to gaze at him and admiring his handsome features.

Am I in love with Draco Malfoy?

She blinked in disbelief, her eyes moving from her own Gryffindor scarf wrapped securely around his neck, the jacket she had wrapped around him to keep him warm and the way she was tenderly supporting his head in her lap and caressing his cheek with her hands.

Maybe... She thought to herself, a smile reluctantly spreading itself on her face.

“You’re too handsome for your own good, you know...” She whispered to him, smirking to herself as she traced his aristocratic eyebrows, laughing softly when Draco seemed to shake the offending limb away and buried his face into her scarf.

When she began to feel rather drowsy herself, she reached forward and pulled her bag towards them, carefully extracting her legs out from underneath Draco’s head and replacing them with her bag before crawling over beside him, stretching herself out as well.

Checking her watch, she cringed slightly when she saw that it was almost 4AM.

I guess I better get some sleep too...She thought to herself, yawning and rubbing her hands over herself in an effort to keep warm before closing her eyes and allowing herself to fall into a light slumber beside him.

Once she was fast asleep, the Gryffindor unknowingly snuggled closer towards the Slytherin, to which Draco responded to by murmuring something unintelligible in his sleep and moving closer towards her as well, turning so that their faces were inches apart.

After several moments, Jaimee – beginning to shiver slightly from the cold– edged herself closer toward him and unknowingly shared herself to her jacket until both their bodies were pressing tightly against each other underneath the small garment. Draco unknowingly threw an arm over her and pulled her warm, smaller body against his.

Neither of them moved for the remainder of the night.

Where am I...?

Jaimee wearily squinted her eyes open as she tried to figure out why it seemed as though she was lying on the floor and why her pillow seemed to be moving. Yawning softly, she turned and found herself face to face with a sleeping Draco, who at that moment seemed to be slowly waking up as well.

She was just about to punch the Slytherin away from her and scream harassment when she stopped herself as she looked around the room they were in – her memories flooding back into her as she suddenly remembered why they were in that position in the first place.

The Astronomy tower...The stars...His fever! Her eyes widened at that and she sat up, hastily pressing her palm against his forehead and breathing a sigh of relief as she noted that his fever had gone down, causing her shoulders to relax.

“Thank you.”

She jumped slightly, pulling her hand back as Draco’s eyes opened to reveal beautiful silver orbs still slightly dazed from sleep and looking at her with an unreadable expression in their depths.

“For what?” She asked self-consciously, edging slightly away from him as she found her cheeks growing warm from the blush that was creeping onto them.

Draco chuckled at her reaction before closing his eyes once more and snuggling himself against her jacket, taking a deep breath before murmuring a response. “For taking care of me...Thank you. I...I appreciate it.” He told her, his voice slightly muffled.

Jaimee hid a smile as she lay back down beside him and blinked sleepily up at the ceiling before closing her eyes and stretching comfortably. “Yeah...Well...You always get so cold easily, Malfoy. You’re such a baby, sometimes...It seems that every time we run into each other, you’re getting yourself sick.” She chimed, shaking her head in amusement.

When the Head Boy could only mumble an embarrassed, haughty response, she laughed again and checked her watch, noting that it was 6AM and that the doors would surely be unlocked in about a couple more hours.

“In any case, we have about an hour and a half before the doors unlock so why don’t you get some more sleep?” She suggested, turning to her side to face him.

Draco opened one eye and peered curiously at her, smirking when he realized the close and rather intimate proximity of their bodies. “Why Potter...You don’t seem to mind how close we are right now. Trying to tell me something, there?” He drawled, immediately causing the girl to glare at him and pull back only to have him clamp onto her wrist and hold her in place.

“Don’t!”

She looked back to see the smirk gone from his face and in its place was instead a serious expression as he met her eyes, his fingers tightening slowly around her wrist. “Don’t...” He repeated in a softer whisper, pulling her back down so that she was lying in the exact position – on her side and facing him with their faces mere inches apart from each other.

“Just...Stay like that...Please...” He whispered, reaching over and gently caressing the dark strands away from her eyes, tucking them behind her ear.

Jaimee found she unable to look away from his beautiful eyes, mesmerized by the dark, almost black rings in the center and how they told of the words that Draco never seemed to be able to say to her – always hidden behind their depths.

Seeing her staring at him, his lips curved upwards into a genuine smile causing her to blush but otherwise return it with a small one of own, her eyes moving to admire his handsome features when –

Oh my...

Jaimee's eyes widened in surprise and deep amusement and she began giggling to herself, immediately causing Draco to raise a single eyebrow in curiosity, his smile still on his face as he watched her struggling to maintain composure.

“What...?”

She shook her head and reached over, her finger briefly touching a single spot on his cheek. “You have a dimple on your left cheek, Malfoy...Just right there.” She teased, touching the offending spot and shooting him a playful grin.

The smile on his face instantly disappeared and he sneered in an effort to salvage his pride, causing her to laugh even more as Draco growled and narrowed his eyes. Watching her laughing, he felt another surge of irritation and edged away, turning his face away so she couldn't see his flushed cheeks.

Finally recovering, Jaimee shook her head and tried to correct herself so as what she had said didn't sound so offensive. “N—No...I wasn't making fun of you, Draco...I just think that it's...Well...Rather adorable, actually.” She told him, still chuckling when Draco turned and shot her a horrified look, his face paling at her words.

“I do not do adorable, Potter!”

Hearing this, Harry broke down into another round of laughter, causing Draco to give a sigh of exasperation. He watched her for a couple of moments before relenting and shaking his head, his lips quirking into another smile as he contented himself with listening to the sound of her soft, melodious laughter.

When she had finally stopped laughing, he raised an eyebrow at her before speaking. “I can see why they’re starting to call you a shrew, Potter...You’re an impertinent little chit, aren’t you? You have no regard for feminine tact.” He drawled teasingly, causing her to redden slightly at the amusement in his voice.

“I’m not a shrew...I’m just... I’m picky, that’s all. If I have to be with a man for the rest of my life, I might as well be with someone whom I can respect.” She answered stiffly, her face sobering as she pondered Draco’s words.

Draco’s eyes twinkled mischievously before he spoke again, drawing her attention to his impish grin. “I actually feel quite sorry for your last suitor, though... What was his name? Lucian McConway? My family and I have done business with the McConways several times in the past...” He wondered out loud, causing Jaimee to redden again.

“Although I must say...Goyle definitely packs a pretty mean punch. McConway will probably need a couple of days to repair the damage done to his nose.” Draco mused, causing Jaimee to shift uncomfortably again at the Slytherin’s obvious amusement.

Seeing her discomfort, he shook his head and gave her a reassuring smirk. “Oh no, don’t get me wrong, Harry... I actually quite agree with what you said...A man should be able to stand his own ground in a fight. It’s pathetic otherwise.” He agreed, immediately causing the girl to scoff in response.

“This coming from the same person who got tackled by a Hippogriff in third year and screamed that he was dying.” She quipped, causing him to scowl in humiliation as she smirked at him and gave him a knowing look.

"I was a child, Potter...I didn't know any better." He huffed, causing the girl to smile fondly at him again and shake her head in amusement.

The next question that came out of her mouth surprised her almost as much as it did Draco.

"Why were you with Marietta Edgecombe yesterday?"

Draco blinked in surprise, turning to see the rather embarrassed expression on Jaimee's face. He hid a smile before answering her, a warm feeling of satisfaction bubbling in his chest.

"I was going to explain...You ran off before I could. Marietta's father is one of my father's business partners... As a special favor, her father had requested I meet with her once during this season in hopes of striking a possible match between the two of us. That is impossible, however, and even my father knows this for I already have my eyes set on you." He assured her, smirking when she stiffened in alarm and shot him a glare.

"D—Don't get me the wrong way, Malfoy! I wasn't jealous or anything – I was just curious! If I remember correctly, Marietta Edgecombe is a whiny, materialistic little brat who expects that every guy would easily fall in love with her. She has a rather irritatingly high-pitched, scratchy voice. Plus, she isn't even that pretty – her nose is rather off-center." She said snidely, causing Draco to chuckle in amusement.

"Touché." He agreed with a smirk, his eyes twinkling with mirth at her reaction.

Realizing exactly how much of a jealous little girl she was acting and talking, Harry looked horrified and buried her face in hands in a desperate attempt to hide the humiliated flush on her features.

Rolling his eyes, Draco reached toward her and pulled her hands away from her flushed face, allowing her to see the tender look in his eyes as he raised a hand and caressed her soft cheek. After a long,

silent moment of staring at each other, she coughed and looked away awkwardly, racking her brain for any further conversation.

“B—By the way... I never got to thank you for saving me the other day...You know, during the Quidditch match.” She started, causing Draco to look surprised for a minute before she continued. “I realize it was a rather unfair victory for Gryffindor...So I’d like to offer you a rematch. I b—believe it’s only fair, after all —”

“That’s not necessary, Harry.” Came the rather amused response as Draco shook his head, waving her offer away but Jaimee was adamant and she glared at him, giving him a firm look.

“I insist, Draco...If you don’t want a rematch, can I at least offer you something else to make up for—”

“Go on a date with me, Potter.”

She stopped midsentence and gaped at him as though he were insane, her jaw hanging open stupidly and her eyes wide with disbelief.

“Wh—What?”

Draco smirked at her expression, reaching over and playfully tapping her nose once with his finger. “Go on a date with me this coming weekend...And we’ll call it even. Consider it a continuation of the time we spent together in Black Manor when my cousin interrupted us...” He told her, looking at her and raising an eyebrow expectantly.

Jaimee blinked slowly, trying to process his words. “Alright...So I go on one date with you this weekend... And we’ll be even? Just like that?” She asked, looking at him uncertainly.

He nodded, one corner of his lips quirking into another smile and allowing her once again to see the dimple on his left cheek. “Well of course there are certain implications of that single date, Potter...Like how you have to pretend to enjoy my company and you have to at least act as though you don’t want to rip my guts out every other minute. No funny anti-suitor diversions either... I really wouldn’t like it



if I suddenly had Crabbe or Goyle chasing after me.” He teased, causing the Gryffindor to erupt into a round of light, amused laughter.

“They’re your faithful goons, they’d never attack you even if I paid them.” She commented, rolling her eyes when Draco simply shrugged and grinned, giving her a wink.

“I learned that I should never underestimate the allure of a sexy, gorgeous shrew such as yourself...Now what’s it going to be, Potter?” He asked, looking at her and waiting for her response.

She laughed again and despite herself, she instinctively nodded in agreement.

“Very well...One safe...harmless...date, Malfoy. You have my word.” She told him, smirking in amusement when Draco pretended to heave a sigh of relief and smiled again, once again gracing her with a view of his rather adorable left dimple.

Feeling a little mischievous, Jaimee couldn’t help giggling as she reached forward and pressed a finger to his dimple again, immediately causing the Slytherin to scowl and bat her hand away but that only made her laugh harder, enjoying the half-irritated, half-exasperated expression on his face.

“Potter, will you quit that? If you keep doing that, I will never smile at you again.” He huffed once more, turning over to his other side so that Jaimee was facing his back and burying his face in her jacket in an effort to hide the smile that was itching to break out once more.

Jaimee’s lips quirked into an impish grin as she sat up and leaned over him, poking him lightly in the ribs in an effort to make him look up.

“Aw, come on Malfoy...I was just kidding around...Please show me that cute, adorable dimple again.” She teased, laughing when Draco growled and shoved her hands away.

“I told you. A Malfoy does not do adorable!” He snapped, his voice slightly muffled as he struggled with his own stifled laughter.

Jaimee raised an eyebrow in suspicion as she heard his barely prevented sniggers, grinning to herself before she decidedly straddled him and began seizing with merciless tickling, instantly causing Draco to erupt into laughter and throw her jacket off in an attempt to struggle wildly against her onslaught.

“Come on Malfoy, show me that adorable dimple...Aw...So cute... So adorable...” She pretended to coo in a teasing voice, laughing herself as watched him desperately trying to fend her off while trying to get a hold of his laughter and his breathing.

“Argh! Hahaha – Stop! Potter, get off! S—Stop it! I’m n—not cute!” He wheezed out, rolling them to the floor as he managed to stop her by trapping her underneath him, allowing him to stop laughing and take several deep breaths to recover.

Watching him struggling to catch his breath, Jaimee grinned and looked up at him with a triumphant gleam in her eye. “So...The great and powerful Draco Malfoy is ticklish, is he? Well...that certainly will come in handy the next time you try to take some house points off me.” She mused slyly, smirking.

When he finally caught up on oxygen, he looked down at her smirking face and matched it easily with a smirk of his own, unknowingly causing the Gryffindor’s breath to hitch as she found herself reacquainted with exactly how sexy the Slytherin’s smirk really was.

“Why Potter...I never knew you to resort to Slytherin tactics in order to get the upper hand...” He drawled softly, leaning down until his lips were hovering just above her ear and sending delightful shivers up and down her spine.

She drew in a shaky breath and closed her eyes as she felt his lips caressing the patch of sensitive skin behind her ear. “I—I was almost sorted into Slytherin in my first year, you know...” She blurted out, biting back a sigh as he bent down and planted a searing kiss onto the pulse point in her neck.

“Really...?” He whispered, his voice barely audible as he continued to kiss a trail down from her neck to her shoulder, nipping gently at the sensitive skin before kissing his way up once more.

“Y—Yes... But I asked to be placed in Gryffindor...” She managed to say, feeling an overwhelming heat envelop her as she continued to let him kiss and nip gently at her neck, succeeding in making her lose all sense of coherent speech altogether.

“Why did you do that...?” Came the soft, heated whisper as Draco finally moved from her neck down to her collarbone, kissing another trail along it as Jaimee’s hands slowly began to press themselves against his firm back.

“I—I...I don’t kn—know...” She stuttered, barely able to restrain a moan as his lips began to travel downwards, leaving another sensual trail of fiery kisses down from her throat down towards her chest, stopping just as he reached the top button of her blouse.

“Were you afraid?”

His voice shook with a growing desire as he used his teeth to easily unclasp the first two buttons of her shirt, causing her to gasp and clutch tightly at his shoulders when she felt him beginning to kiss her exposed cleavage.

This time, she didn’t bother to stifle the moan that escaped her lips as she closed her eyes and entangled her fingers into his hair, shivering when she felt his body beginning to tense in growing arousal.

“I...I don’t know...Maybe...” She whispered, her hands reaching under his shirt and softly caressing the firm, toned muscles of his chest and stomach. He groaned at her touch and unclasped another button of her shirt, nipping at the bit of delectable flesh exposed underneath.

“Are you afraid now?”

He asked, stopping for a minute and looking up to meet her eyes – dark and laden with a heavy desire as they stared into his own

passion-filled gaze. Keeping her eyes on his, she bit her lip and reached up to wrap her arms slowly around his neck.

“Maybe...”

With that, she pulled his face down and caught his lips in a deep, sensual kiss that robbed Draco of any other remaining rational thought. He responded by wrapping his own arms around her and yanking her against him until their forms were perfectly aligned, his body exploding into a flurry of pleasure and sensation.

He heard her moan within their intertwined lips before she opened her mouth, allowing him entry and to engage her own tongue into an explosive battle for dominance before she surprised him by letting him win, permitting him full exploration of her sweet mouth.

She closed her eyes tightly, her fingers digging into his back as his hands began an eager exploration of her body, traveling from her smooth thighs and caressing their way up to the curve of her hips before resting possessively on her breasts.

Arching upwards against his touch, she whimpered when his lips left hers but soon gasped as those same lips were against her neck once more, licking and biting against her soft skin and sending bolts of electricity up and down her body.

“Draco...” She whispered softly, causing him to stop and look up to meet her beautiful face. He stared at her, admiring her flushed cheeks amidst the pale porcelain skin, the green eyes glowing with desire and her thoroughly ravished red lips, achingly waiting to be kissed once more.

“You’re so beautiful...” He murmured out loud, reverently brushing his thumb over the well-known scar on the otherwise creamy skin of forehead.

He turned to her lips once more and obliged to their silent plea by and bending down and meeting them in a sweet, agonizingly tender kiss, caressing her tongue gently with his before drawing her to his own mouth, allowing her to taste him as he had done with her. She

obliged uncertainly, unknowingly making him melt with her innocent administrations before she pulled away and looked at his flushed face.

Draco was staring at her with heavy lidded eyes; his breathing coming in rather shallow gasps and his eyes a dark stormy shade of gray. He closed his eyes, racking his brain for a coherent thought or sentence in an effort to stop what they were doing.

Fortunately, she seemed to be thinking the exact same thing.

"I—We should stop..." She whispered, biting her lip nervously and watching as Draco nodded gratefully and turned away so he could try to recompose himself, his breaths coming in short gasps as he willed himself to calm down.

She watched, mesmerized as the flush began to fade from his cheeks and he finally turned to give her a wry smirk, shaking his head in amazement as he tried to fix his disheveled hair.

"You'll...be the death of me, Potter...You're...Driving me crazy..." He mused, laughing at himself before he gave her another handsome smile, causing her to blush but return it with a beautiful and genuine one of her own.

She didn't answer him, however, and instead, leaned over and gave him a small peck on the lips, causing the Slytherin to instantly blush again. She ignored his embarrassment and instead, pulled back and grabbed her jacket from the floor, slipping it back on herself.

The smile never left Draco's face as he watched her button the top clasps of her blouse; wrap her scarf back around her neck and attempt to fix her ruffled hair, a look of unhidden admiration on his face.

Does she even realize how naturally sexy she is...? He thought to himself, shaking his head in amusement as he observed her movements.

Seeing him staring at her with a strange expression, Jaimee looked slightly irritated and self-conscious as she raised an eyebrow at him.

“What? Do I have something on my face?” She snapped, causing him to chuckle and shake his head.

He would have said more but a loud click on the classroom door indicated to both teenagers that their little rendezvous was over and at hearing this; Jaimee had jumped to her feet, offering a hand to help him up as well.

Checking his watch and noting that it was now 7:30AM and that his classes would be starting soon, Draco sighed and accepted her hand, pulling himself up and adjusting his robes. He turned to meet her slightly awkward and uncertain smile, watching in amusement as the Gryffindor girl shoved her hands into her jacket pockets.

“Well...I guess...I’d better go get ready for breakfast.” She began, biting her lip and offering him a grin which he returned with a friendly smirk nodding.

“Yeah...You should...You look horrible.” He drawled, causing her to growl and punch him lightly on the arm and eventually both of them started to chuckle good-naturedly.

She shook her head before bending down to pick up her bag, slinging it over her shoulders. “I...I actually found you...endurable last night, Malfoy...But then again, maybe that’s because you were asleep most of the time.” She kidded, causing him to roll his eyes in response.

“Oh please...You loved my company and you know it, Potter. Admit it. There’s no one else you’d rather be stuck all night in the Astronomy tower with except for me.” He quipped, causing her to laugh in spite of herself, her eyes twinkling with humor.

Looking down on the floor to avoid his teasing eyes, she bit her lip again before rewarding him with an impish smile, shrugging nonchalantly.

“Maybe...” She mused, hiding a grin as she took a step forward and leaned up to give him another kiss on the cheek, causing Draco to blush again as his confident smirk faltered and he stammered his next response.

“S—So...Same time tomorrow?” He kidded, causing her to roll her eyes, laughing at his audacity as she turned around and finally made her way towards the door.

“You wish, Malfoy.” She retorted easily, smirking as she reached for the doorknob.

“Harry?”

She stopped and looked over her shoulder to peer curiously at him, raising her eyebrows expectantly as she saw the slightly nervous look in his eyes.

“W—Will you save me a dance tonight? At the debutante ball...?”

Hearing the hope in his words, she turned around and answered him with a playful wink.

“Maybe...”

The look in her eyes promised him otherwise of her agreement before she smiled at him again and breezed out of the classroom, a highly amused and chuckling Draco following right behind her.

A/N: Finally! :cheers: I apologize but it seems that the only way for these two stubborn dunderheads to ever get over themselves and admit their feelings is to lock them in a room for an entire night. :evil smirk: In any case, I hope you enjoyed that! It's my Christmas gift to everyone – a long chapter of Draco/Harry goodness!

As a piece of trivia, I'd like to point out that this chapter was actually inspired by one of my favorite scenes in Hana Yori Dango, a Japanese Drama / Manga. You should all check it out; it's one of my favorite love stories. :wink:

So what do you think? Any suggestions for what happens next? Be a dear and show me how grateful you are for this chapter by dropping

me a review, alright? Like I always say, more reviews, better thoughts to work the story with! Mwah! Happy Holidays everyone!



## Chapter 16 –Ready to Rumble

Harry let out a loud scream of horror as she was literally shoved backwards into an oversized tub filled with pink and green bubbles by a pack of her godfather's hired beauticians and hairdressers, who at that moment were all crowding noisily by the entrance of her bathroom.

Waiting by her bedroom, Sirius winced and held back a rather amused laugh as he heard a loud, messy splash before his goddaughter was screaming once more above the pleading requests and murmurs of the women gathered around her.

“NOW LOOK WHAT YOU'VE ALL DONE! I'M SOAKING WET! I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW THIS IS MY FAVORITE PAIR OF BOXERS! YES, I STILL WEAR BOXERS! WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME FUNNY?!” Jaimee screamed, causing Sirius to roll his eyes again and collapse onto the bed, burying his head into his hands.

This is going to be an interesting night... Sirius thought, his shoulders shaking in mirth as he recalled the horrified expression on Harry's face when she had arrived in her dormitory after her classes that afternoon only to find Sirius and an entire pack of beauticians and hairdressers waiting for her.

They had seized her immediately, looking equally horrified to find a debutante who dared to wear her clothes in such a haphazardly boyish manner – skirt slightly torn at the hem from running around, school blouse wrinkled and wrongly buttoned and her hair a messy, tangled nest.

Evidently, his goddaughter did not cater much to any sort of primping or feminine organization and in all honesty, Jaimee wasn't exactly someone Sirius expected to be the proper debutante. That, however, didn't mean he couldn't enjoy the incredibly amusing situation while it lasted.

His thoughts were broken when he heard Jaimee's furious, scandalized voice once more echoing from her bathroom, causing him to break out into another round of sniggers.

Inside the bathroom, Jaimee was desperately trying to keep her partially exposed body submerged within the bubbles while at the same time, glaring and trying to fight back the onslaught of feminine hands all around her trying to help scrub her clean or shampoo her hair.

“I DEMAND MY PRIVACY! I AM THE SAVIOR OF THE WIZARDING WORLD AND I WILL NOT BE TREATED THIS WAY! ARE YOU ALL LISTENING TO ME?! I’M THE – HEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! WHY ARE YOU UNDRESSING ME?! AND WHAT THE BLEEDING HELL IS THAT SPONGE THING?! IS THAT SUPPOSED TO SCRUB MY BACK – Ooh. That feel’s nice...But wait—THAT’S BESIDE THE POINT!” She raged, struggling wildly with her captors as they once again tried to tug her clothes off.

“HOW DARE YOU?! PISS OFF, BASTARDS! OH STOP STARING AT ME LIKE THAT LADY, IT’S NOT LIKE YOU’VE NEVER HEARD A GIRL SWEAR BEFORE—ARGH! HOW DARE YOU?!” There was a rather loud slap, followed by a horrified gasp of pain before one of the beauticians was running out of the bathroom, sobbing and clutching her cheek.

“Fanny, what’s the matter? What happened—”

Sirius never got to finish his sentence as he rushed over to the distressed woman, watching with his jaw hanging open as she had raced out of the room, her cheek turning a nasty purple.

“HAH! THAT’LL SHOW YOU FOR TRYING TO SCRUB MY ARSE! I CAN SCRUB IT MYSELF, I’VE BEEN DOING IT FOR 17 YEARS! Well maybe less considering I probably couldn’t have scrubbed it when I was a baby but still – BUT THAT’S BESIDE THE POINT! NOW WHO’S NEXT?!”

Hearing Harry’s gleeful threat and another round of violent splashing around, Sirius finally sighed and braved into the bathroom, his face breaking out into a highly amused grin at the sight that greeted him.

In the middle of the large, golden tub was a drenched and half-dressed Jaimee, with a fierce growl on her face as she struggled with the crowd of exasperated women surrounding her who at that very moment were attempting to wrestle her out of her soap-stained school blouse and attempting to shampoo and wash the tangles out of her dirt-stained black hair.

Instinctively, she wrenched the nearest shampoo bottle from one of the ladies' hands and pointed it warningly at them, her eyes wide and maniacal. "STAND BACK! COME ANY CLOSER AND I'LL SQUEEZE THE BOTTLE OF SHAMPOO ON ALL OF YOU!" She cried out, cackling sadistically.

One of the ladies – unimpressed and looking highly irritated – raised an eyebrow at her. "Zat...Is a bottle of conditioner, Miss Potter..." She informed the disgruntled teen, glancing impatiently at her drenched watch before turning around and meeting Sirius' apologetic grimace with a glare.

"Really? What's a conditioner?" Harry asked, her shout dropping to curious tone as she raised an eyebrow and held the bottle up to eye level to read the instructions.

"Grab her!" One of the beauticians suddenly cried out and almost immediately, they all pounced on the unsuspecting debutante – causing her to scream in surprise as she was drenched into the bathtub.

Before the boy-turned-girl-who-lived could struggle any further, one of the ladies had positioned herself by the head of the tub and began scrubbing the shampoo into her hair, creating a thick and strawberry-scented lather.

"WHAT THE BLEEDING HELL – GET THE FUCK OFF OF ME! SIRIUS! YOU'D BETTER GET YOUR ARSE OVER HERE AND GET THEM OFF OF ME OR I SWEAR I'LL KICK YOUR ARSE TOO! ARE YOU HEARING ME – WHAT?! HOW DARE YOU LAUGH AT ME?! THIS IS ALL YOUR BLEEDING FAULT! SIRIUS! SIRIUS!!!!!" Jaimee sputtered midsentence, spitting out a stream of soapy water as one of

the beauticians had dunked her head into the water again in an attempt to wash her face.

“You’ll thank me later, Harry... You wouldn’t have known how to dress up yourself otherwise. I’m only doing this on McGonagall’s orders.” Sirius chimed innocently as he leaned back against the doorframe, holding back his laughter.

“AND WHO THE HELL TOLD YOU TO FOLLOW HER?! I COULD HAVE DRESSED MYSELF JUST FINE! IF YOU WERE SO WORRIED, YOU COULD HAVE COME HERE TO HELP ME YOURSELF –”

“What do I know about a woman getting ready? They spend hours and hours just to get prepared to go to a ball, I don’t know what kind of heinous rituals they do to themselves! And I never want to know!” Sirius exclaimed incredulously, his eyes widening as his face looked simply horrified at the thought.

“BASTARD! SO YOU LEFT ME TO FEND FOR MYSELF WHILE THESE BLOODTHIRSTY VULTURES YOU CALL BOOTY-CIANS—”

“Beauticians.”

“WHATEVER! YOU LEFT ME TO FEND FOR MYSELF WHILE THESE—THESE—WHATEVER WOMEN DO ‘HEINOUS RITUALS’ TO ME FOR HOURS?! WHAT KIND OF GODFORSAKEN GODFATHER ARE YOU?!!” Jaimee screamed at him, her face wrenched in fury as she grabbed a nearby bar of soap and hurled it at him, successively hitting the Marauder on the forehead.

Sirius stumbled backwards slightly in pain before he clutched the now forming bruise on his forehead and glared at his so-called goddaughter but that proved meaningless as she was once again dunked into the bubble-filled water.

“BLARGH!!! THAT TASTES HORRIBLE! WHAT THE – SIRIUS! SIRIUS, WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU GOING – DON’T YOU DARE LEAVE ME IN HERE WITH THEM! I DON’T KNOW WHAT KIND OF HORRIBLE THINGS THEY’RE GOING TO DO TO ME!” Harry

screamed again but Sirius gave her a smirk and shook his head, tossing the bar of soap she had hurled at him back into the tub water.

“Sorry, kiddo... But this is getting much too violent for my liking.” He told her, winking pointedly at her before ducking as another bar of soap came flying towards him again, narrowly missing the side of his head by a couple of inches.

“COWARD! HOW DARE YOU SAY THAT, YOU ESCAPED AZKABAN FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! YOU CAN’T HANDLE A PACK OF BOOTY-CIANS—”

“Beauticians.”

“OH WHATEVER THE HELL THEY ARE! SIRIUS?! SIRIUS!!!”

The Azkaban escapee was already whistling to himself as he walked hastily out of the bathroom, ducking every now and then along the way as several objects – a drenched boxer included – came flying and zooming past his head.

“I’ll see you in three to four hours, Harry... Take care of her, ladies. She’s quite a handful.” Sirius encouraged cheerfully, peering his head into the room one more time to give the poor women a handsome smile.

Before he could hear their response, however, a large and heavy brass bathtub knob came flying towards his nose, causing him to yelp and pull his head back from the room just in time to hear his goddaughter scream out another interesting and unique flurry of curses directed at him and one of the ladies cleaning her scream in absolute indignation.

“MISS POTTER! YOU WILL STOP YOUR INCREDIBLY CRUDE LANGUAGE RIGHT NOW! MY EARS ARE POSITIVELY BLEEDING!”

“OH YEAH, LADY?! WHY DON’T YOU GO SCREW A—”

“Bye, Prongslet!” Sirius called out loudly and cheerfully, grinning as he shut the bathroom door and shrugged on his jacket before bouncing excitedly out of her dormitory, whistling and idly wondering as to what snack he could possibly get himself from the kitchens.

“Hey, Padfoot!”

Sirius turned from where he was leaning against the entrance to Jaimee’s private rooms, munching contentedly on a pack of gummy bears he had nicked from Dobby in the kitchens when he heard a familiar voice in front of him.

Looking up, he saw Neville Longbottom smiling rather awkwardly and fearfully at him while tugging at the collar of his stylish tuxedo, a bouquet of flowers in one hand and a small box in the other.

Grinning widely at the sight of the boy, Sirius surged forward and clapped the Gryffindor loudly on the back, causing him to wince in pain but otherwise relax at the gesture. “Neville, you sly little dog you! You look good. Have you been working out?” He asked curiously, punching the younger man on the arm.

Neville smiled, ducking his head sheepishly. “Actually, Harry’s has been helping me keep up a jogging and routine exercise routine every morning this past week in order to help me shape up for tonight. I’m glad it’s paid off.” He admitted, looking pleased with the compliment.

Sirius nodded, looking impressed. “You are looking really sharp tonight, huh? Wow...Hair wax...New shoes...New suit? It actually looks familiar...That’s amazing; did Harry lend you that suit?” Sirius asked, recognizing the tuxedo.

Neville looked slightly embarrassed but nodded, laughing as he answered. “I’m afraid so, Sirius... Although I had it slightly altered to fit me better. Harry was a lot more physically toned than I was back when she was a boy. She actually gave the suit to me considering she wouldn’t be needing it anymore.” He explained, tugging nervously at the suit’s collar again.

“Thanks though. You look great too...As usual. I’ll bet you’re going to score some points for yourself out there as well.” He added further, returning the gesture as he also good-naturedly punched the other man on the arm.

The Marauder merely winked in response before smirking and casually readjusting the collar of his own tuxedo. “But of course...Harry’s not the only one tonight who’s going to get some action, if you know what I mean.” He drawled, turning to smile charmingly at himself at the nearby mirror.

He grinned at Neville again before pointing to the box in his hand. “What’s in the box?” He asked, popping an orange gummy bear into his mouth before offering one to Neville, who shook his head politely in refusal.

“It’s a corsage...My grandmother ordered me specifically to make sure I give one to Har—Jaimee—for the ball. She said it’s traditional.” He explained while Sirius nodded his approval, leaning back against the door.

“Well, I hate to say it Neville but you’re ridiculously early... Jaimee probably won’t be out for another hour or so... So you have a bit of a long wait ahead of you. I hope that’s alright.” He told him, nodding in recognition as he recognized some of the older wizards and witches – obviously families and guests of the ball – who passed them in the corridor.

“Oh I know, Sirius... Don’t worry. My grandmother also made sure I was waiting for my date an hour early. She said it’s better I was the one who waited than her and that I should be incredibly grateful that I was escorting Jillian Aimee Potter to the ball so it’s only right I’m early.” He told the older man and at that, Sirius gave him an amused smirk.

“Boy, your grandmother sure wears the pants in your family, huh?” He commented, causing Neville to cringe in embarrassment but nod in agreement.

“Yeah...She does. But she really wants me to find a good match this season. I actually had to explain to her that I was only escorting Jaimee as a friend and that there was no chemistry between the two of us for me to pursue courtship with her. Plus, it’s...weird...” He added, shrugging.

Sirius laughed, popping the last gummy bear into his mouth before shoving the now empty bag into the pocket of his expensive, exclusively designed tuxedo. “Well while we’re waiting, we might as well wait inside. I’m sure Harry wouldn’t mind...Why don’t we—”

Both men stopped as they heard a rather loud, horrified scream coming from inside, followed by a violent-sounding struggle before—

“WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THAT THING?! ARE YOU CRAZY, YOU’RE GOING TO PUT IT THERE?! WHY?!”

Sirius’ and Neville’s eyes widened as they backed away slowly before meeting each other’s questioning gaze.

“I—Is it safe?” Neville asked uncertainly, biting his lip and tugging at his collar once more.

Before Sirius could answer, they heard another loud scream – this time coming from one of the beauticians who was no doubt attempting to calm and placate his goddaughter.

“Mistress Potter... It is imperative that you get a bikini wax! Your godfather ordered us specifically to give you the full treatment!” Came the reasoning voice and both Sirius and Neville winced when they heard a loud sound of something being painfully yanked off before it was followed by Jaimee’s horrifying scream of pain and curses.

“HOLY FUC—”

Both men scrambled back several meters from the dormitory entrance, briefly bumping into each other as well as several guests before laughing nervously and turning back to face one another with a slightly nervous smile.



“Well... Guess there are some things about women which we men should just...not know about, eh Neville?” Sirius tried to kid lightly, running a shaking hand through his hair and turning a deathly pale face to the younger Gryffindor.

Neville laughed nervously and nodded, his own hand shaking as he once again attempted to loosen the knot of his collar. “Yeah, d—definitely not.” He agreed, watching as Sirius grinned in greeting to several more of the older Wizarding families that were heading toward the Hogwarts grounds where some of the other guests were beginning to wait.

A moment of awkward silence passed between the two men before they both laughed nervously again and turned to look back cautiously at the door before coughing and looking at each other once more. Then, looking uncertain, Sirius gave Neville a questioning glance.

“You still want to wait inside?”

“I—I was actually going to say, m—maybe we should see how the other guests are doing.” Neville rushed out almost immediately, gesturing towards the grounds where the other guests were heading.

Sirius nodded instantly, grinning albeit too widely.

“Right! We wouldn’t want to be rude now, would we? Let’s go, I’m sure we can come back to pick Jaimee up in an hour or so, she wouldn’t mind.” He agreed, laughing nervously before nodding and leading Neville off to follow the other guests toward the outside.

Once they found themselves within the slowly growing throng of wizards and witches gathered all around Hogwarts entrance, Neville excused himself from Sirius and went to join his group of Gryffindor bachelor friends who were standing near the entrance.

Sirius, on the other hand, amused himself by watching the crowd for a couple of moments – observing the variety of tuxedos and gowns being paraded about by middle-aged women. They chattered

amongst themselves, eagerly flashing or displaying to the other the ornate collection of jewelry hanging from their necks.

The men, on the other hand, were content with having gathered by the table of liquor that had been laid out in the middle of the area for those waiting for the debutantes to get ready. Among them, Sirius recognized, was Lucius Malfoy – decked out in a very expensive and sharp tux – surrounded by some of the other prestigious heads of the most powerful wizarding families in England.

Walking himself over to them, he smirked as Lucius looked up and greeted him with a casual raising of his wine glass before indicating from him to join them.

“Ah...Black. A pleasure you could join us this evening...” The current Malfoy head drawled as he nodded once in acknowledgment, meeting Sirius’ smirk with an easy leer of his own.

“Lucius...How riveting to see you as well.” He responded easily before turning to the handsome, Italian man beside the blonde and giving him a nod in acknowledgement as well. “Giovann Zabini...It’s been awhile since I’ve seen you.” Sirius greeted, turning briefly to accept a glass of wine from a passing house-elf before giving the man a grin.

“So it has, Black...I believe the last time we’ve seen each other was before your notorious entry into Azkaban.” Giovann replied, raising an eyebrow before taking a small sip from his wine glass.

Sirius grinned wider before answering. “Ah... Well, you’ll be glad to know I’m so much more of an insane lunatic than I was before I entered that hellhole.” He quipped, causing some of the other gentleman around them to laugh – either awkwardly or in amusement.

Lucius smirked at him again before gesturing to the other men around them. “Black, let me introduce you to some of my associates.” He began, pointing to the handsome, younger man beside Giovann who had a remarkable resemblance to him in terms of Italian features.

“This is Antonio Zabini...He’s Giovanni’s younger brother as well as one of your goddaughter’s classmates – Blaise’s father.” Antonio merely inclined his head in a greeting, giving Sirius a small polite smile.

“The man to his left is Peter Winchester – another good friend of mine. He single-handedly owns and manages Winchester Investments, the largest chain of investment banks here in England. I believe he’s here tonight to make sure his son Philippe meets with my niece, Lorraine, in order to arrange a potential match.” Lucius explained and Peter smiled cordially at this, nodding his assent.

Sirius nodded back in greeting, raising an eyebrow in curiosity. “The Malfoys, huh? Why do you want to merge your families together?” He asked, looking from one man to another.

“As a friend of Lucius’, I do hope to arrange a potential merging between the Winchester and Malfoy families. We’re one of the few remaining names who have been with magic since the very beginning...It would be an honor to merge our bloodlines.” Peter said to Lucius, who merely smiled.

Peter turned to Sirius, explaining further. “Malfoy Multinational Conglomerates has been a faithful business associate of my family’s company for decades, you see. Ever since we had just been starting out, the Malfoys have always been very gracious in providing generous amounts of capital in order for us to succeed and expand our business to various areas. Now that we’re the leading financial firm in the country, I’d like to return the favor.” He explained and Sirius merely shrugged, pretending to look interested in all the business talk.

“Perhaps...But then again, that is not my decision to make, Peter. I am merely here to facilitate my own son’s potential match tonight...As you very well should be aware of, Black.” Lucius pointed out and at that, Sirius chuckled before downing his drink in one gulp.

“In your words, Lucius, that’s not really my decision to make. Jaimee will decide for herself whom she will marry. In fact, I’m giving her so much freedom in choosing that she’s building quite the reputation.”

He responded easily, causing Lucius to scowl in irritation and the other men around them to chuckle in amusement.

Hearing his comment, however, Lucius sneered and gestured to the next wizard beside Peter Winchester who – unfortunately for Sirius – was dreadfully familiar.

“McConway! How are you? How’s your son, is he doing okay?” Sirius cringed as he noticed the scowling man for the first time that evening, noting the unwelcoming sneer on his face being directed towards him.

“He’s fine, Black. Thankfully, no serious damage was done to his face after your goddaughter’s little...stunt. I can assure you, however, that he will not be caught anywhere near your subversive goddaughter ever again.” He said snidely, causing the other men to hide amused smirks behind their wine glasses to Sirius to shrug and grin helplessly at him.

Luckily, before he could say anymore, Lucius had spoken again – sounding rather amused as he finally introduced Sirius to the last man beside McConway – a tall, dark-haired wizard who looked strangely familiar to the Marauder – although he couldn’t exactly remember where.

“And last but not least, let me introduce you to Nigel Hammerstone, the president and CEO of Hammerstone International. He and his family have recently moved back from Sicily just a couple of months ago and he’s here simply to mingle and reacquaint himself with some friends.” He finished just as Nigel turned and gave Sirius a cold smile that didn’t reach his dark eyes.

“Ah...Sirius...I actually remember you. We were in the same year back in Hogwarts...” He mused, raising his glass up at him in greeting.

Sirius stared at him for a long moment before a light finally lit up in his head and his eyes widened in recognition. “Nigel! Nigel Hammerhead—I MEAN! Hammerstone.” He hastily amended himself quickly, noting the flash of irritation in the other man’s eyes.

"I remember you! You were in Ravenclaw weren't you? You were...a scrawny –skinny little boy who used to walk around all the time with those gigantic glasses? You had rather big teeth...Was that you?" Sirius asked, grinning in recognition as Nigel reddened in embarrassment at the memory before coughing and forcing a laugh.

"Yes...Well...I was a child, then. I suppose I was a rather late bloomer..." He started, trailing off and looking at his friends who nodded their assent and obliged with a complimentary laugh but Sirius was adamant, his eyes twinkling in remembrance.

"You sure were! You had really scruffy hair and your glasses were really huge and round! Your head was also slightly bigger than your body! Hahaha!" He howled with laughter and slapped his hand against the nearby drink table, oblivious to Nigel's narrowing eyes and chuckling at the memory before continuing. "That's why everybody called you Hammerhead. Your head was as big as a hammer! Hahaha. Yeah, those were the days, huh?" He murmured, still chuckling.

Finally aware of the dangerous flashing in the other man's eyes, Sirius finally cleared his throat and nervously offered a disarming smile. "So...You look great now, huh? Ehehe...What ever happened to your glasses?" He asked casually and the other man sneered.

"I had them magically corrected with a potion...As well as my teeth. I also worked out more after Hogwarts so my body evened out my big head." He drawled sarcastically, his eyes still narrowed and an angry scowl on his face directed at Sirius.

Sirius smiled timidly, shifting around before responding. "So...Just got back from Sicily, huh? What's the occasion? A little vacation with the family?" He asked, hoping to change the subject.

Lucius hid another smirk behind his wine glass as Nigel's eyes narrowed further.

"No...I'm getting a divorce. I came to England to finalize the papers."

At the silence that followed after, Sirius fiddled uneasily with his thumbs and looked up every now and then in hope of one of the other men saving him but none of them seemed to be willing to so instead, he tried another approach.

“Oh...Well, at least you’re a bachelor again, huh? You don’t have any children to worry about. Not that children aren’t wonderful, I’m sure you’ll have some wonderful children yourself one day—”

“I actually have a five-year-old daughter. She – as well as my wife – despise me and can’t stand the sight of me. That’s why they came back to England after the divorce.” He drawled further, an uninterested expression on his face as he watched Sirius paling and struggling with words again.

“Uh...I, uh...Well, that’s uh—”

“Black?” Lucius asked, his gray eyes gleaming in amusement as he finally relented and spoke up, drawing Nigel’s attention back to him.

“Narcissa is around here somewhere and wishes to see you, terribly. You are her cousin, after all. Would you mind if we looked for her?” He offered, immediately causing Sirius to heave a sigh of relief and nod gratefully.

“Yes, I—let’s do that, Lucius.”

“Neville! Is that you?”

Ron, Dean, Seamus all burst out into grins and catcalls as Neville approached them with a slight blush as well as a grin on his face. All three of his friends, he noticed, were all wearing formal tuxedos and had their hair styled with hair wax as well –making them look just as sophisticated and handsome as all the other older gentlemen around them.

“You look great, Longbottom! Who knew this handsome guy was hiding underneath all that shy, awkwardness?!” Seamus exclaimed as he walked forward and surveyed his friend from head to toe, nodding his approval.

“Seamus...Stop checking Neville out in front of me. You’re making me feel insecure.” Dean complained and at that, the Irish boy grinned and walked over to him, giving him a reassuring kiss on the cheek.

“Don’t worry, you’re still the hottest guy here for me. Except perhaps Ron, over here.” Seamus added teasingly as an afterthought, winking suggestively at the redhead who promptly choked and shoved him away in alarm.

“I’m straight, Seamus. Don’t get any ideas.” He warned, his eyes narrowing as both Seamus and Dean sniggered in amusement at his reaction.

Neville, on the other hand, had frozen in shock and was now staring at his two friends in absolute stupor and disbelief, causing Ron to smirk and Seamus to grin at him again.

“W—Wait a minute...Y—You two...You’re gay?” He asked, his voice cracking in surprise.

Seamus and Dean both looked at each other before bursting out laughing, shaking their head at his confusion. Ron, in contrast, simply groaned and rolled his eyes before crossing his hands over his chest.

“We’re bisexual, actually...But why would that shock you, Neville? You’re not a muggle. You’re a wizard...Being bisexual is normal in the wizarding world isn’t it?” He asked, looking confused as he looked at Ron, who merely smirked again before explaining.

“I don’t think it’s that...I think he’s shocked at the fact that you and Dean are together. I was too until awhile ago when you both horrified me by kissing in front of me.” He started, shuddering again as Dean looked slightly sheepish.

Seamus, however, grinned wider and winked at the dark-skinned boy before pulling him into a hug. “Well, it’s not like we’re from pureblooded families or anything like you or Neville so we’re not obliged to marry a woman in order to procreate. So we’ll do just fine. I got to hand it to you...I love the fact that wizards are so open to this

kind of thing. Muggles are more awkward, aren't they?" He asked, turning to Dean.

Dean nodded, chuckling. "Well in muggle society, you don't have wizards marrying giants, elves, werewolves or even vampires so same gender marriages would naturally shock them." He reasoned, shrugging.

Neville was still in shock as he was staring at the three boys in silent stupor.

"Oi! Neville, snap out of it! I'll bet Harry wouldn't overreact this much about their relationship. In fact, I'm betting she even saw this coming." Ron mused, shaking his head in amusement.

At that, Seamus grinned again, his eyes taking on a rather dreamy state. "Ah yes...Harry slash Jaimee Potter...Now there's a person who absolutely amazes me. As if he wasn't hot enough as a guy...As a girl, she's absolutely delectable. I wouldn't mind getting myself a piece of that hottie..." He said out loud, causing all three other boys to glare at him.

"Seamus...Don't push it." Dean growled, his eyes flashing in jealousy.

"That's my best friend you're having dirty thoughts about, Finnegan." Ron growled protectively, his eyes narrowing.

"Stop fantasizing about Jaimee. She's one of the nicest girls I know." Neville pointed out, finally snapping out of his stupor long enough to defend his friend.

Seamus held up his hands in defense, laughing good-naturedly. "Haha...Relax, guys. I was only kidding. You know I respect Harry as much as all of you do...I was just pointing out how I find it ironic that I had a crush on him as a guy and I still have a crush on her as a girl. Ah...the beauty of bisexuality." He mused, causing Dean to whack him on the shoulder.



“Stop it or I’m going to start ranting about several other hot guys I know.” He threatened, immediately causing both Ron and Neville to cringe and Seamus to smirk in amusement.

“No one’s hotter than me, Dean.”

“Two words. Draco Malfoy.”

“Well, maybe except him. He’s in a league of his own. I’d like a piece of him...Rawr.” Seamus easily agreed, his eyes glazing over as he thought of the sexy Slytherin.

“Argh! My ears are bleeding!” Ron cried out, covering both his ears with his hands and shaking his head furiously as he tried to block the names Seamus and Dean began to blurt out.

Neville laughed at his friends’ antics, shaking his heads as several more names were mentioned in light of the conversation.

“Sirius Black?”

“He’s hot but I kind of think he’s a bit insane...Plus, he’s Harry’s godfather. Definitely off-limits.” Dean considered uncertainly, a single eyebrow raised in thought.

“Blaise Zabini.”

“What do you two have with Slytherins?” Ron asked in exasperation, shaking his head as the two ignored his question and continued to debate with one another.

“Zabini’s hot. I love the Italian accent...” Seamus said out loud, stroking his chin.

“Harry Potter – Guy.”

“Oh yeah...Mmm. Hot hot hot...I thought I already talked about him.” Seamus pointed out, knocking Dean lightly on the head.

“Anton Malfoy.”

Dean shook his head, looking apprehensive. "There's something about him that's too sleazy for my taste...But I understand why you'd like him." He added, glaring pointedly at Seamus who simply nodded eagerly and gave him a wink.

"Yum."

"What about me?" Ron asked, his curiosity getting the better of him. Neville, Seamus and Dean all looked at him in the same time in surprise, their eyebrows raised in amusement.

Ron laughed nervously, shrugging. "J—Just curious." He offered, offering a grin.

Seamus stared at him for in consideration for a long moment, his eyes clouded over in thought but before he could say anything, Dean had voiced out his thoughts for him.

"Actually, Ron...Your appeal is more boyishly cute than hot. But that's probably what makes you attractive." Dean told him, reaching over and patting the redhead on the shoulder.

Ron scowled, looking displeased. "Cute? So I'm not hot like Harry was? That's rather unfair." He complained, looking put out.

"You too, Neville...You're cute. Hot is just not something you can associate with certain types of people." Seamus thought out loud, finally causing Neville to roll his eyes before laughing and shaking his head.

"I'm going to leave you guys to debate further on that, then. I have to pick Jaimee up for the ball, she should be just about done by now...So I'll see you guys later." He excused himself, smiling before turning to walk back into the castle.

Just as he was about to enter, he heard Ron exclaim loudly once more – his voice probably louder than intended as it reached the chattering crowd of people near the Hogwarts castle entrance.

“Why am I not hot?! I can be hot too you know! I can!”

Neville laughed to himself and finally walked into the castle, heading upstairs towards Jaimee’s private dormitories. Along the way, he caught sight of several younger years making their way up to their common rooms and throwing envious glances at the seventh years as they passed them in the hallways.

Giving them a small smile as he passed, he was just about to turn a nearby corner when he saw a familiar blonde head making her way from the top of the staircase. His heart pounding, he looked up and was rewarded with the sight of Luna Lovegood slowly making her way down the stairs with a soft, glowing smile on her face.

The Gryffindor stopped immediately, a dreamy expression spreading out onto his features as he watched her descend gracefully, looking very beautiful in a white, off-shoulder flowing gown made of satin that fit snugly around her petite figure.

He noticed that the make-up on her face accentuated her features perfectly and highlighted the bright blue of her eyes. Her blonde hair had been styled into elegant curls and were piled neatly to the top of her head and held up firmly by a golden tiara. Several corkscrew strands falling to frame her face, accentuating her bare shoulders and the radish earrings that were still dangling from her ears.

Seeing this, Neville’s smile immediately turned tender and he found himself mesmerized by her presence, easily recognizing as she neared him the character that Luna’s gown – as well as the gold half mask she held up every now and then to the upper half of her face – meant to portray.

“You look heavenly, Queen Hera.” He greeted softly, swallowing nervously when Luna stopped and finally turned to face him, setting her mask down and rewarding him with another smile as she took in his handsome attire and countenance.

“Neville...? Is that you? You look...different...” She noticed, blushing slightly as she noticed him staring intently at her. He matched her

blush, smiling nervously as he forced himself to focus on her radish earrings in an attempt to calm himself down.

Luna smiled at him again before gesturing to the guy beside her, drawing Neville's attention to his presence for the first time. "Let me introduce you to George Lancaster...He's a friend of my family's. He's also my escort this evening." She told him, failing to see the scowl on Neville's face as he turned to meet the good-looking, dark-haired boy wearing a simple tuxedo next to her.

George held out a hand to him, smiling cordially as Neville reluctantly shook it. "Are you one of Luna's friends here at Hogwarts? It's a pleasure to meet you." He told him, nodding as Neville could only nod wordlessly back before turning back to Luna.

Forcing a smile, he bowed courteously in front of her before taking her hand and giving it a kiss on the back of her palm. "Well, good luck out there later. You're a beautiful debutante...Perhaps the most beautiful here." He told her, raising himself up.

She blushed again, indicating to the flowers and box in his hands. "Who are you escorting, Neville?" She asked curiously, peering at his face.

Neville gave her a nervous smile. "I'm actually waiting for Jaimee...So I'd better go and get her now." He said slowly, sighing as he gave her one last look before bowing to both her and George and turning around to turn a corner.

"Neville!"

Stopping and turning to meet Luna's voice, his eyes widened when he saw her biting her lip uncertainly, unsure of what to say. George looked back and forth between the two of them, looking slightly uncomfortable.

"Dance with me later...Okay?" She asked, chuckling and finally smiling at him.

Neville couldn't have wiped the huge grin on his face if he wanted to. He nodded instantly, nearly dropping the box in his hand before laughing at himself and turning to walk hastily towards the opposite direction – failing to see Luna's fond smile directed toward his retreating back.

Lorraine looked at herself hesitantly in the mirror, feeling slightly self-conscious as she watched her personal assistants tying the ribbon behind her, securing her lavish gown around her slim waist. Sighing, she finally turned and presented herself to the smirking boy seated on the edge of the bed behind her and waited impatiently for his reaction.

Draco simply raised an amused eyebrow, surveying her appearance from head to toe.

"You look...hideous."

Scowling, she hurled her half-mask at him, causing him to chuckle and stand up to reward her with a kiss on the forehead.

"You look beautiful, Aphrodite." He told her, instantly causing Lorraine to relax and glance back at herself in the mirror to inspect her own appearance in self-satisfaction.

She wore a very elegant strapless gown of baby pink and white shades, emphasizing her slim, smooth shoulders and flowing out into a thick skirt held up by several layers of petticoats underneath. Half of her long, blonde hair was pulled into a princess-style chignon and held up by an extravagant, diamond-encrusted hairclip while the rest was left to fall down her shoulders. Several shorter wisps of hair fell down the side of face. A beautiful pink bow had been tied around her waist and positioned itself behind her, trailing downwards into a long, elegant trail of pink and white satin onto the floor.

A beaming smile was on her face, highlighted even more by the flawlessly applied make-up and the slight sparkles on her lashes. Holding up the half-mask to complete the effect, Draco had to smile as he was given the exact impression of a mischievously grinning Greek goddess Aphrodite herself, waiting and smiling expectantly up at him.

“Finally... I was starting to fall asleep. Are you honestly that hideous that you need four hours to get ready? It must have been hard to make yourself look decent.” Draco teased again, causing Lorraine to simply smirk at him before letting it turn into a smile as she surveyed his appearance as well.

“Wow, Coco...You look hot. If Potter doesn’t notice you tonight, she must be blind. At this rate, you’ll make even the guys stare at you and steal all the stares off of us debutantes.” She complained teasingly, causing Draco to raise a single eyebrow.

“I thought I’ve told you. Do not call me by that blasphemous name!” He growled but Lorraine wasn’t listening, still smirking as she continued to inspect his appearance, finally realizing why all of her girl friends would often bribe her to introduce them to her oldest cousin.

He was wearing a very stylish black tuxedo which was accentuated with several shades of white and silver from the colors of the undershirts as well as neckties he wore underneath, sharply bringing out the colors of his intense eyes. It seemed to fit perfectly against his athletic build, showing off strong shoulders and his lean form. His hair, as usual, was pushed back with a minimum amount of hair wax, allowing for some strands to escape and fall enticingly into his eyes.

“It’s not like you’ve never seen me wear a tuxedo before. We wear them all the time back at the Manor.” He told her and while she shrugged her agreement, she gave him a small smile as she realized what was different.

“It’s not that...It’s just that...There’s something different this time. You’re...emanating more sex appeal than usual...Did anything happen that I should be aware of?” She teased him, this time causing Draco to smirk and chuckle in amusement.

“You’ve been reading too much of those Witch Weekly magazines for your own good, Raine. Now come on, we’re going to be late.” He told her, pinning the corsage he had brought for her to the front of her gown before offering his arm.

She nodded and took it, allowing him to guide her out of her room and into the small common room filled with waiting bachelors just outside the guest' quarters. They both found Anton Malfoy in the middle of a crowd of debutantes, looking completely immaculate in his white, designer tuxedo. His hair was pulled into a short ponytail ending just by the nape of his neck, several strands escaping to fall against the side of his handsome face.

The minute he saw them, he smiled widely and strode over to them – purposely ignoring Draco's sneer of dislike and focusing all his attention on Lorraine's glowing features.

"Lorraine! You look absolutely beautiful, my beloved sister." He told her, hugging the blonde and giving her a kiss on both her cheeks. "I'm so sorry I won't be able to escort you tonight...But when you had asked me, I was already promised to young Dionne here." He explained, indicating the stunning redhead who had walked up to them and had taken his arm.

Looking back and forth between the tension between the two Malfoy sons, Lorraine smiled nervously and turned back to her brother. "It's quite alright, Anton...It was a good thing Draco agreed to take me. Otherwise, I don't know what I'd do..." She told him, smiling.

Anton sneered at that, turning to give his older cousin a forced smile. "Yes...Draco is always around to pick up the leftovers, isn't he?" He drawled, causing Draco's hands to clench into fists as he tightened his jaw, struggling to contain his anger.

"Dionne...You remember my cousin, Draco...? Draco...This stunning debutante is my date for the evening." Anton introduced, gesturing to the redhead on his arm once more and the girl smiled flirtatiously at Draco in response, reaching a gloved hand up for him to take in acknowledgment.

"It's a pleasure, Draco..."

With a mocking sneer on his face, Draco obliged and took her hand in his. He didn't bend down to kiss the back of her palm, however but

instead, simply glanced down at the offending limb in cold greeting before letting it drop listlessly. He ignored the insulted look on the debutante's face and turned to Lorraine, who winced at the anger in his eyes.

He needed to get out of there as soon as possible before he lost his hold on his temper – as well as sense of pride – and beat his cousin to death in front of all the watching eyes of the guests around them.

“Raine...We're late. We better go.” He told her coldly, nodding briefly to Anton and his date once more before he turned and escorted his cousin out of the common room, silently cursing the other Malfoy in his head as they finally exited the guests' chambers and began walking towards the Hogwarts grounds.

Jaimee glared spitefully at the older woman in front of her, her arms crossed over her chest and a scowl on her face as she watched the beautician setting bottles and tubes of cosmetics on the table beside her and readying herself to prepare the Gryffindor's make-up.

Inwardly fuming, she set her mouth into a snarl as the woman leaned forward from where she was seated on a stool in front of Jaimee and began applying small amounts of foundation and powder onto the debutante's face using a small brush, making her scowl even more in displeasure.

“Miss Potter, please. We are very tired and we'd like more than anything to finish up so we can go home.” The lady reasoned in a pleading tone, looking irritated as she set down the brush and sighed, watching the irate expression on Jaimee's face.

“Why do I need make-up? I look just fine already!” She growled in response, glaring hatefully at the array of cosmetics spread out in front of her again.

The woman sighed again before gesturing to the mirror in front of them, indicating to Jaimee her delicate features. “Because...You are beautiful without make-up...Think of how magical you will look with even the slightest bit of make-up just to accentuate your features.” She told her, managing a small encouraging smile.



Jaimee only scowled further, adamantly shaking her head. “I don’t want to look magical! I want to look normal!” She protested but the woman had already rolled her eyes and was applying more foundation to her face again, much to her protests.

Sighing, Jaimee finally let her scowl dissolve into a helpless wince and sat back against her chair, closing her eyes in resignation. They had been at this for three hours and quite frankly, she was exhausted herself. And they hadn’t even started the ball yet, at this rate.

Opening her eyes and glancing around her bedroom, they narrowed as she caught sight of the exquisite pale green gown spread out neatly on top of her bed – as well as the long, white gloves and numerous other accessories positioned neatly beside it.

Letting her gaze travel to her own reflection in the nearby mirror, she had to stare in amazement at what the beauticians had done to her hair – styled it into an elegant coil right on the top of her head, letting midnight strands fall into beautiful curls down, barely touching her back. It was fastened securely with a Greek, silver crown fashioned from sheaves of grain – symbolic of the Greek goddess Persephone – which was undoubtedly meant to match with the added silver highlights of her gown.

Jaimee scowled slightly to herself. They’re dressing me up like I’m some kind of bloody doll. She thought in frustration, sighing heavily as the woman in front of her began applying silver-tipped mascara to her long eyelashes, contrasting beautifully with the shade of green in her gown.

Taking a deep breath, she reached out and pulled her half-mask towards her, holding the mask up on its handle to inspect it in mild curiosity. Observing the small amount of glitters and sequins she had ordered specifically done, she smirked to herself as she recalled the heated debate she had to win over her godfather in order to convince him that she would be going as the Greek goddess Persephone and not Aphrodite.

Although it had irked Sirius mildly that his goddaughter had chosen to represent the goddess of the underworld instead of the more popular goddess of love and beauty, he had finally relented, seeing no other option to make Harry wear a gown in the first place.

Since no other debutante had dared to register to be wearing a costume depicting the goddess of the underworld, this eventually suited Sirius just fine as he realized that Jaimee would probably be unique and catch more attention from the other girls.

Harry, on the other hand, couldn't have cared less. She had chosen to be Persephone specifically because she knew all the other girls would be wearing more feminine and fairytale-ish costumes ranging from Aphrodite, Cleopatra, and Helen of Troy to the Shakespearean ladies Juliet, Desdemona and Portia.

She had already heard that Hermione would be wearing a costume inspired by Athena – the Greek goddess of courageous endeavor. Some of the other girls were even discussing about how they would be wearing some gowns inspired by muggle fairytales, which had caused her to smirk in amusement but otherwise shake her head.

In all certainty, she wouldn't be caught dead wearing an Aphrodite costume nor would she ever allow herself to wear any costume that was inspired off some Shakespearean love story or tragedy. There was honestly too much lace, ribbons and pink in those costumes and Harry Potter most definitely does not do pink if she could help it.

Turning back to glance at her reflection, she watched as the beautician expertly began applying a small amount of dark eye shadow just above her eyes, giving the impression of contrasting beautifully against her green eyes and making them seem to glow even more vibrantly than usual.

So this is what girls do to themselves... Harry thought raising an eyebrow in thought as she pondered all those moments when she – as a guy – had waited for hours just for his dates to get ready. She actually felt sorry for them now for to have had to go through all this torture for their entire life must have been pure agony.

This is all Malfoy's fault... I wouldn't have to endure all this if he hadn't turned me into a woman. She thought bitterly, turning away just as the beautician had picked up a small container of pink powder and began rubbing it onto her cheekbones.

At the thought of the blonde Slytherin, she shifted uncomfortably and found herself fiddling nervously with her thumbs in confusion. She hadn't seen him in between her classes since the Astronomy tower that morning and that fact bothered her somewhat in a way she couldn't really understand.

Of course, she knew it was completely unavoidable given that they didn't share any similar classes that day and the fact that her schedule kept her in classes for the entire morning and in rigorous Auror training all afternoon, sparing her no time in between in order to hang around like she used to.

It didn't help that all the classes she had taken that year were all rather difficult. On Hermione's suggestion, she had dropped out of Divination had taken Arithmancy instead – much to her regret. Arithmancy reminded Jaimee strangely of muggle mathematics – something she wasn't particularly interested in.

Malfoy's the top student in Arithmancy, isn't he...? I wonder if I can get him to study with me –WHAT?! She mentally stopped herself, her eyes widening in horror before she shook her head furiously in order to clear the thought away.

Will you STOP thinking about him?! What's the matter with you?! You've done nothing but think of him all day! She scolded herself, blushing furiously as she turned back to her reflection and let her gaze drift off as she stared at her own blushing cheeks.

Merlin's beard, you're ALREADY thinking like a girl, Potter! Get a grip! She thought, attempting to bury her face in her hands only to have her hands slapped furiously away from her face by the woman in front of her. Jaimee winced and muttered a half-hearted apology, dropping her hands onto her lap and scowling silently at the floor.

She was rewarded with another mental image of Draco pinning her firmly to the floor of the Astronomy tower as his hands roamed themselves possessively over her body and his mouth did unspeakable things to her neck, making her moan out loud in desire

Blushing darker, Jaimee blinked rapidly several times to clear the image away, feeling another strange heat envelop her entire body.

Noticing this, the woman in front of her stopped and gave her a look of concern. "Miss Potter...? You look a bit flushed...Are you okay? Shall I open the window for you?" She asked, causing Jaimee to redden even more and cough sharply in embarrassment.

"N—no, I'm fine...Do your...brush thing." She told her, smiling nervously before turning back to exhale in relief.

Another image flashed through her head – this time of her and Draco fighting in the DADA classroom and him slamming her violently onto the cold wall and trapping her hands tightly above her head, both of their bodies flushed with exhaustion and exhilaration as they pressed onto each other for support.

She remembered the feeling of having his strong form pressed tightly against hers and the enticing scent that emanated from him that caused her senses to tingle delightfully in pleasure. His body had seemed to fit so perfectly against hers – complementing every curve and crevice like they were a human puzzle made specifically for one another.

A perfect puzzle...Those were his words. She realized to herself, recalling the words he had spoken to her in Black Manor.

Sighing, she stood up and allowed the woman to help her into her gown; all the while failing to see anything else around her as she continued to lose herself in her own thoughts of the boy she had known to be her archrival since first year.

Harry had to admit – Draco had come a long way from the snobby, whiny little brat she had met in Madame Malkin's shop six years ago. She had watched him mature into an intelligent and responsible –

though still highly conceited – young man. By the end of fourth year, he had completely surpassed Hermione in all of their academic subjects and had continued to do so every year thereafter.

His natural intelligence was beyond amazing. He spoke with innate confidence and articulation and presented himself in class with an easy charisma that instantly made him the favorite of every teacher in school – something Hermione had always been bitter about and complained to both Ron and Harry every time.

What amazed Harry the most was perhaps how she had never seen him with his nose haphazardly buried in textbooks studying like Hermione nor had she ever seen him looking less than completely composed and immaculately gorgeous – almost as though he was never pressured despite all the classes he was taking each year.

Aside from his intelligence, Jaimee had also observed how much Draco had become more independent. He no longer felt the need to be surrounded by Crabbe and Goyle wherever he went but instead, he alternated his company between his best friend Blaise Zabini and every now and then, a beautiful girl he would date for as long as a month or so.

Of course, as Harry she had never paid any attention to his romantic escapades since she had been pretty busy with some of her own but she was aware of the rather nasty reputation that had gathered around his name when it came to crushed and heartbroken ex-girlfriends.

I can't really blame them...He does exude a kind of dark, sexy allure that seems to affect women. She thought in amusement, thinking of how much she was beginning to be drawn in after only several months of being turned into a girl.

"Miss Potter...?"

Blinking herself out of her thoughts, she finally turned to look at the happily smiling woman in front of her in query and seeing the self-satisfied smile on her face directed towards the mirror, she slowly followed her gaze.

As soon as she caught sight of her own waiting reflection, she felt her breath hitch up into her throat, her eyes widening in disbelief and her cheeks coloring beautifully as she found herself staring into the face of perhaps the most beautiful creature she had ever seen.

Holy Merlin... She thought to herself, her heart pounding painfully in her chest.

"I—I...I'm...h—her? I—mean, I'm...that? Sh—She's m—me??" She croaked out weakly, a gasping laugh escaping her lips as she continued to stare at the ethereal creature in front of her in wonder, her gaze traveling from the enchanting face, pale, creamy shoulders down to the lusciously delectable body she had yet to realize was actually hers.

She lifted a hand and laid it gently on the simple diamond necklace that hung from her neck, watching in amazement as the creature in front of her mimicked her actions perfectly. A small impish grin began spreading into her face and she watched as the reflection in front of her grinned back, mimicking her wink.

"Hel—lo... Persephone..." She whistled in amusement, causing the woman smiling at her to frown and give her a weird look. Realizing she must have sounded like a drunken male hitting on herself, she coughed and turned to give the woman a smile of acknowledgment.

"Ah! Hehe...I meant...Uhm... Thank you for all your hard work, Madame. I would like to apologize...I realize I must have been a rather difficult charge." She said hastily, watching as the woman smiled back graciously, accepting her gratitude and apology just as several more of the beauticians who had helped her had re-entered the room and were now staring at her with wide, proud smiles on their otherwise exhausted faces.

"Indeed, Miss Potter...But staring at you now makes me feel a sense of pride beyond words. You are truly exquisite." One of the woman had gushed out, bowing gracefully to her and reaching over to hand Jaimee her purse.

Jaimee looked at it for a minute then looked back up at the woman before looking back down at the purse. "What's that tiny little pocket for?" She asked, taking the tiny purse in her hand and look at it in confusion.

The woman gave her an equally confused look, meeting the questioning looks of the other beauticians before turning back to look at the Gryffindor again. "It's your purse, Miss Potter. It matches the color of your gown." She told her, smiling and nodding while the women behind her nodded and smiled encouragingly as well.

Jaimee blinked at them, raising a single eyebrow before turning to open the tiny purse only to find that it was so small that she couldn't possibly fathom what she could bring to the party that could fit into the damn thing.

"Er...Okay...So what am I supposed to put in this tiny thing? Why do I even have to carry around a purse if it's going to be this tiny to begin with? Isn't that a bit inconvenient and impractical? And besides, doesn't this dress have any pockets?" She asked pointedly, digging through her skirt but at her question, the women looked scandalized and shook their heads furiously.

"Oh, no no no! Miss Potter, a gown cannot simply have pockets!" The blonde woman nearest Jaimee had exclaimed, her eyes wide as she seized forward and rifled through her own bag, pulling out a small tube, compact and a small packet of what looked like mints.

"Eh...Why?" She asked bluntly, raising an eyebrow in growing annoyance.

"B—Because! That is simply not how things are done!" The beautician replied impatiently. Then, snatching the purse from the confused debutante's hands, she opened it and placed the items inside before handing it back to her with a satisfied smile.

"There...Now, you're all set to go. Your godfather said he will be waiting for you just outside as well as your date...Are you ready, Miss Potter?" A red-haired woman Sirius had addressed as Giselle had

spoken, smiling as she moved behind the Gryffindor to help her into her wrap, pulling it over her bare shoulders.

“I’m Harry Potter...When have I ever been ready for anything that happens in my life?” Came the girl’s deadpan, mocking reply that failed to reach the amusement of the ladies that were too busy gushing over her appearance to notice her sarcasm.

Then, handing Jaimee her purse – much to the girl’s reluctant scowl – Giselle began leading her towards the entrance to her dormitory while all the other women hurried excitedly after her, spraying bits of perfume onto her skin as well as small amounts of hair spray onto her hair as she passed them.

She winced and groaned miserably as she was finally shoved outside her dormitory room, the pack of smiling, giggling lady beauticians behind her gaily waving her off and wishing her good luck.

I hate my life.

A/N: Wahahaha! Not yet...You’ll have to wait until the next chapter to find out what happens! :wink: So be an angel and leave me a review alright? What do you guys want to happen in the Yule Ball? Tell me your thoughts! Until then...Toodles! Mwah!

P.S. Don’t kill me everyone. :nervous smile: I’m actually working on the next chapter as I post this so it should be out soon enough. I expect it might be pretty long though. Let’s see what happens. :wink:



## Chapter 17 — The Debutante Ball

“Welcome, dear students and honored guests to Hogwarts 95th Annual debutante ball.” Headmaster Dumbledore announced cheerfully in front of the magically enlarged yet still crowded Great Hall later that evening.

A wide and jovial smile was on his face as he met the cheers, applause and greeting nods of the swarm of wizards and witches gathered around the hall, all of which were waiting for the debutantes to be individually announced to formally signal the start of the ball.

The headmaster chuckled, his eyes twinkling when he caught sight of the cheering seventh year boys eagerly cheering and catcalling, obviously awaiting the arrival of the debutantes. Also waiting were hordes of photographers, as well as reporters for the Daily Prophet hurriedly taking pictures and chattering away in front of several magical quills and parchment floating in front of them.

“Now I know all of you are excited to see our lovely young ladies instead of this barmy, old man in front of you right now but spare me a couple of moments... I’d like to have some words so do attempt to pretend you’re interested in listening.” He quipped, causing some of the students, as well as some of the older matrons watching to chuckle at his words.

“I’d just like to formally welcome all of our guests this evening – I believe most of our esteemed family heads are here tonight. As well as our very own Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge himself as he is here to oversee his own son’s potential match.” He began, smiling as the crowd turned to smile at the Minister seated at one of the higher tables at the end of the room.

Fudge stood up briefly and bowed, giving the crowd a gracious smile before sitting back down and allowing Dumbledore to carry on with his speech. “Also, I’d like to welcome tonight’s band who kindly offered to be our entertainment for the evening.” He added, gesturing jovially to the band that was setting up on a stage near the middle of the hall.

The band inclined their heads briefly towards the applause in acknowledgment before continuing to fix their instruments amidst the murmurs and chatter of the guests beginning to shift around in growing anticipation.

Sirius Black was obviously not an exception to this agitation as he began looking around the hall in avid curiosity, his dark eyes scanning the crowds around him for familiar faces he knew back from his own years in Hogwarts as a bachelor.

He noticed some of the older women who had once been debutantes during his time now married and sitting proudly with their chosen husbands. Smirking slightly, he caught sight of several of his own ex-girlfriends in the crowd who promptly chose to sneer spitefully at him and look away, ignoring his very presence altogether.

Looking around further, he noticed that some of the women – who during his years had been those obsessed with their appearance – are now ironically the ones who had frankly let themselves go and were now either slightly overweight or practically smothered in make-up, causing him to wince and look away, shaking his head.

He briefly caught sight of the Weasley family sitting in an entire table near the corner of the room and he inclined his head towards them, giving them a friendly grin which they all returned. Charlie and Bill Weasley were sitting with them – as well as Fred and George and Bill's new wife Fleur Delacour, still looking as stunning as ever in a beautiful gown of white and lavender. Ginny Weasley was seated right next to her and crossing her arms over her chest, looking slightly put out.

Chuckling to himself, he let his gaze wander to the closed entrance of the Great Hall where he knew all of the seventh debutantes were all lined up behind outside, waiting to be announced individually to Wizarding society. Realizing this, he crossed his fingers as he mentally prayed that Jaimee wouldn't make a scene in front of everyone tonight.

The moment he had seen his goddaughter when she stepped out of her dormitory earlier that evening, he had frozen to the ground and

stared speechless with a dazed look on his face at the girl he had once known to be the young, courageous boy who had helped him escape the dementor's kiss in third year.

Jaimee Potter was, without a doubt, the most beautiful debutante – no, woman – he had ever seen his entire life and that was saying something considering that Sirius had been with a very good number of women before and after his thirteen year stay in Azkaban.

Her features were so positively enchanting that Sirius had noticed Neville blinking several times as though he was trying to make sure she was real and not just some figment of his imagination. Surveying her appearance, he mentally thanked McGonagall for convincing him to hire that battalion of beauticians that morning. They had obviously done their job flawlessly.

He remembered briefly how Neville had blushed like a first year student and had shakily offered Jaimee the bouquet of flowers in his hand. Sirius had actually felt sorry for the poor, trembling boy as he had taken almost fifteen minutes attempting to pin the corsage he had bought for her to her gown until Harry had finally rolled her eyes in impatience and pinned it on herself before giving the quivering boy a reassuring smile to calm him.

Then, as Jaimee took Neville's arm, Sirius had walked with them to the entrance of the Great Hall where some of the other debutantes were already lined up and waiting with their escorts to be announced. Since they had been the last and the latest one to arrive, they had taken the very back of the line where Jaimee remained to be seen by her friends up front. While waiting, Neville had continued to gulp in nervousness and wipe his sweating face with a handkerchief.

Sirius had laughed loudly when Neville had jumped in panic the instant Jaimee had slipped her hand in his, crashing himself painfully onto the bachelor in front of him. The tall Slytherin boy had growled and turned around to glare at him only to stare and drool at the sight of Jaimee and give her a flirtatious smile, causing his debutante date to slap him indignantly on the cheek.

Jaimee, however, had simply sneered at the boy and bluntly informed him that his fly was open, causing the boy to flush in embarrassment and hastily fix himself before turning back to the front and ignoring the scathing looks his date was giving him.

At Jaimee's reassuring smile, Neville had been even more embarrassed and looked as though he wanted the floor to swallow him alive and it was at this scene that Sirius had finally excused himself and told him that he would be waiting for them in the Great Hall after their grand entrance.

Up ahead, he caught a glimpse of a glowing Hermione in an elegant blue Athena costume smiling and waving excitedly at him, her arm around a tall boy Sirius had recognized to be the popular Quidditch player Viktor Krum. Smiling and waving back, he walked on further and caught sight of Draco Malfoy – looking more regal than ever in an exquisitely tailored tux – and escorting a stunning blonde in a beautiful Aphrodite costume.

Noticing him, Draco gave him a smirk and politely inclined his head towards the Marauder who blinked in surprise before returning the smirk and nodding back, not at all expecting the Slytherin's acknowledgment or politeness for that matter.

Seeing the similarity of Draco and the girl's features, he quickly deduced that this had been the niece that Lucius was talking about before he finally entered the Great Hall and joined the throng of pureblooded wizards waiting nearby in anticipation of the night ahead.

From then on, he had been fidgeting impatiently as he listened to Dumbledore's introductions and glanced every now and then at the doors of the Great Hall as he thought of how Jaimee was doing and how they were ever going to get through this night.

"Sirius? Sirius Black??"

He stiffened as his thoughts were broken by a soft and strangely familiar feminine voice behind him, causing him to cringe to himself in agitation.

Great...Another ex-girlfriend that's about to slap my face. This night is off to a rather great start. He thought, sighing in irritation before turning to come face to face with the smiling, red-headed woman behind him. She blinked briefly, taking in the surprised expression on his face before she smiled again, breaking him out of his stupor.

"Oh Merlin...I haven't seen you in years, how are you?!" She exclaimed, laughing cheerfully and rushing forward to throw her arms around him. Sirius, however, was still recovering from shock as he continued to stare into the beautiful, glowing face of the only woman he had fallen in love with seventeen years ago.

"Regina...Regina?!" He finally managed to croak out, forcing a weak and humorless laugh as she pulled back and grinned up at him, looking as gorgeous as ever almost as though nothing had changed at all from the last time they had seen each other.

She laughed at his expression, nodding ruefully and biting her lip in slight embarrassment before gesturing to herself with a wry grin. "I know what you're thinking...I look completely different and much older than I used to." She started, shaking her head.

The Marauder continued to be at a loss for words, simply staring at her achingly familiar face and taking in every inch of the face he had grown to memorize during his own hunting season. He felt his heart beginning to pound in his chest as all the feelings he used to have for Regina back when he was younger came flooding back to him, reminding him of their bittersweet past.

"Regina...? Regina Vallehan?? As in, former prime debutante – Regina Vallehan?" He exclaimed teasingly, his eyes wide and a tender twinkle in his eye as he finally rushed forward and embraced her again, feeling a sense of warmth envelop his chest.

Regina rolled her eyes and flushed in embarrassment, hastily waving his compliment away. "Stop it, Sirius! That was a long time ago...I'm nothing like the debutante I was back then." She admitted, fidgeting self-consciously to herself as she noticed Sirius' teasing eyes inspect her from head to toe.

For the life of him, he couldn't understand what the woman could possibly mean. Flicking his gaze briefly over her, he smiled as he took in her exquisite yet modest gown, the bright yet more mature sparkle of her deep amber eyes and the womanly curves of her figure.

He noticed something else about her too – something that piqued his curiosity greatly at that. Trailing his eyes down her slender hand, his eyes widened when he caught sight of the adorable yet very intimidated little girl who was clutching her fingers and hiding herself unsuccessfully behind her in nervousness.

Failing to see Regina's uncertain fidgeting, Sirius sunk down to his knees and smiled gently at the little girl behind her. "Well, well...Who's this little cutie you have with you? What's your name, princess?" He asked her, his eyes crinkling as he smiled wider at seeing her innocent face up close.

"Keira..."

His gaze softened at hearing her soft, adorable voice and he looked up at Regina again, who smiled at his antics. Then, looking back at the little girl with red curls clutching a small lion to her chest, he smiled again and nodded his understanding.

"Keira, huh? I see... That's such a beautiful name...How old are you, Keira?" He asked again, rising up to pick a single flower from one of the decorations on the nearby tables before stooping back down and handing the little girl the flower.

She accepted it and rewarded him with a toothy grin, setting her stuffed lion down long in order to allow him to see her rose-tipped cheeks and uncertain expression. "I'm...five." She answered, looking up at Regina in question.

Seeing this, the woman laughed and held the girl gently to herself before turning back to Sirius and watching as he rose up again to meet her gaze. "She's adorable...Whose child is she?" He asked softly, wincing inwardly when he heard the dread in his own voice.

Regina bit her lip similar to how Keira had done before answering him, her voice dropping to a soft whisper.

“She’s...my daughter.”

Hearing this, Sirius nodded again, feeling a deep pang of regret and bitterness rising in his chest. He looked up again and gave her an all-too-wide grin in an attempt to mask his feelings.

“She is, huh? Well, she’s gorgeous...Just like you. You and your husband must be proud of her. Hehe...So...Uhm...Where is your husband? Why don’t you introduce me to him?” He rambled, looking around the room and absently grabbing two wine glasses from a passing house-elf, downing both drinks in two consecutive gulps.

Regina smiled uncertainly again, her gaze silently taking on a hint of sadness and dropping to the floor. “I—I don’t have a husband...Well...Not anymore.” She admitted, forcing a chuckle in a weak attempt to sound amused but it ended up choked instead.

Sirius looked up at her in surprise at hearing this – his wide eyes flicking from her to the curiously staring girl clutching her mother’s leg before returning to rest at Regina’s blushing face in concern.

“I’m so sorry. I...That was...really insensitive of me. Merlin, I—I’m so sorry.” He suddenly rushed out, his own face beginning to redden as he promptly snatched another glass of wine and downed it instantly before burying his face into his hands.

“Oh, no, no! Don’t apologize!” She hurriedly assured him, laughing and shaking her head as she removed his hands from his face and allowed him to see the warm smile on her face – as well as the fond smile that was also directed at him from Keira.

He gave her a weak grin, looking sheepish. “I’m sorry, that just came as a shock to me. I knew you got married...I heard it from people so I assumed things were doing great. I just...I didn’t expect—”

The corners of Regina’s lips quirked upwards slightly before she nodded to Keira to walk off towards the nearby group of children in

front of them, causing the girl to smile and wave briefly at Sirius before running off to her friends and leaving the two adults alone.

When she was gone, Regina took a wine glass for herself from one of the house-elves and responded to Sirius' comment, a rather bitter smirk setting itself onto her face. "Yeah...I certainly didn't either." She agreed, a cynical tone in her voice.

"Keira and I actually returned to England so I could finalize the divorce papers this month...As well as to find a new place to live and start over a new life from scratch." She told him, watching him nod in understanding.

He blinked in surprise, briefly pondering her words with a sinking feeling of dread. "Divorce papers...? You wouldn't, by any chance, have married Nigel Hammerhead did you?" He asked in disbelief, causing the former prime debutante to erupt into a round of light laughter at his use of the old, childish nickname.

"You still call him that? He hates that!" She teasingly admonished him, laughing harder as Sirius merely gave her a sheepish grin and shrugged, scratching the back of his head.

When her laughter died down, she took a sip of her wine before surprising Sirius further with her next words.

"He's a complete dickhead."

Blinking in shock at hearing the former debutante speak such profanity, Sirius managed a throaty chuckle before handing her another wine glass when she had finished hers. She thanked him before drinking again, the hint of bitterness now clearly visible in her eyes.

"If I may ask...Why didn't the marriage work out? It seemed pretty good at first, didn't it?" He asked her uncertainly, his eyebrows fusing together as she watched her struggling to compose herself while attempting to answer his question.



She gave him a forced smile. “I s—suppose so...But then again, maybe I was just blind. It’s just that...it took me twelve years to realize how much of a conceited jackass he really was.” She told him, laughing bitterly to herself as her eyes dropped down to the floor.

Sirius placed a hand uncertainly on her shoulder, causing her to look up at him in surprise. “Why don’t you tell me what happened? Maybe I can go and kick his arse for you the way I used to back in school.” He teased lightly in a half-hearted attempt to lighten her mood.

For a moment, it seemed to work as she gave him a grateful smile before turning away again. “H—He...He was barely home at all, actually. I cant even sat I knew him at all. I always thought he was working the extra hours because he was really dedicated to his company...I guess I let myself be ignorant.” She began, sighing and letting her eyes wander to her daughter.

He followed her gaze, his eyes a mixture of confusion and regret as they both watched young Keira giggling and laughing happily with a group of little girls a couple of feet away from them. Regina smiled at hearing her daughter’s laughter before turning back to give Sirius a rueful look.

“The day I had Keira was the happiest day of my life...And he wasn’t even there to see me or her – his new daughter. In fact...He never even got to know her at all. She seemed like an additional account in his balance sheets that he had to spend on every now and then...It hurt me so much that he was never a father to her.” She informed him, stopping to wave back at Keira who had given her a smile and a cheery wave.

Feeling an all too familiar aching in his chest, Sirius hastily turned away from her sad eyes and forced himself to continue speaking – hating more than ever the amount of his life he had wasted rotting in that jail cell in Azkaban.

“I’m...sorry.” Was all he managed to say and it had come out in a barely audible whisper but Regina had heard it and she continued to speak, her eyes never leaving her daughter’s face.

“And then I found out the reason he was always staying so late in his office every night. One of his associates told me he was having an affair with his secretary – well more than one of them actually from what I heard...And when I found out, I just...couldn't take it anymore.” She told him quietly, causing a flash of anger in the Marauder's dark eyes.

Regina masked the pained look in her eyes with another laugh before downing her wine in another long sip. “So I got the hell out of there. I packed my things, got Keira and ran. I served him with divorce papers about six months after that. And about another six months later, I returned to England to live with my mother.” She finished, turning to give him a wry smile.

After a long moment of awkward silence, he could only nod again, unsure of what to say to her.

“So...H–How's England doing for you? I heard you lived in Sicily, right? Are you...liking it so far?” He asked lamely, cursing himself in his mind as he continued to search for any topic of conversation to move them away from the painful subject.

She didn't seem to mind his question however and gave him a cheerful smile, her eyes brightening up. “Oh, it's wonderful...I've been spending some time with all my friends and my family here so we're doing pretty well. Keira absolutely adores it here...She wasn't really able to get out much to meet friends back in Sicily. She was sheltered mostly...” She told him.

Sirius welcomed the change of subject gratefully and grinned back, gesturing to the adorable little five-year-old who already bore a remarkable resemblance to her mother. “She's really adorable...She looks like a miniature version of you. Only...You know...cuter.” He teased, causing Regina to glare pointedly at him in helpless amusement.

“She actually begged me to bring her here tonight. She said she really wanted to see all the beautiful princesses in all the pretty gowns.” Looking slightly embarrassed at Sirius' amused look at her, she hastily corrected herself. “Those were her words, not mine.

She's...really into princesses and fairytales and all that." She informed him, causing him to laugh and nod in understanding.

"So...You attended the debutante ball to show Keira all the 'princesses'?" He asked, looking amused but Regina shook her head hastily again, giving him an exasperated glare. "O—Of course not! Actually...I was invited here to give a speech later to the debutantes. Dumbledore said something about me being former prime debutante and helping to inspire the debutantes now." She explained and at that Sirius grinned wider, looking impressed.

"I see...Well that's certainly something, huh? Can you believe it's been seventeen years since the time you were behind those doors, waiting to be introduced...? Escorted especially by yours truly?" He commented, pointing to the Great Hall entrance with a wink.

She blushed at his quip and chuckled, nodding. "Yes. I remember. I also remember you being late to pick me up that night." She told him teasingly, causing him to look slightly sheepish.

"Yeah...I'm sorry about that. James was drunk the night before and I had to help him get ready to pick Lily up before I could leave to pick you up." He admitted, causing Regina to give him a small, warm smile.

"You loved your friends very much." She observed and at that, Sirius looked up at her and gave her a wide smile, nodding. "Yes...I did. I still do. That's why I see Har—I mean—Jaimee—like my own so—daughter. I would crawl on glass for her." He told her and Regina nodded, her eyes softening.

"I'm actually very excited to meet young Jaimee...She is the Prime Debutante this season isn't she? Rumor has it she is exceptionally beautiful and spirited. Just like her mother was." She said, letting her eyes trail over to where Dumbledore was finally making the last of his announcements.

Sirius nodded and let his own gaze travel back to Keira just as the little girl let out a giggle, popping a chocolate tart into her mouth.

“Yes...She is. You...love your daughter very much don't you?” He asked her suddenly, causing her to look at him in surprise.

“Y—yes. How—?”

He laughed, inspecting her expression closely. “I can tell from your eyes... They warm up whenever we talk of her. And the way your voice sounds when you speak of her or say her name...There's a very sincere, an innately protective tone in it that amazes me.” He observed, causing her to blush and look down, unsure of what to respond.

They both looked up when they finally heard Dumbledore ending his speech and everyone erupting into a round of loud applause and murmurs, indicating that the debutantes were about to enter and that the ball was formally about to start.

The large group of male seventh-years behind them erupted into another chorus of loud whistles and catcalls, clapping enthusiastically as they all turned around to watch the debutantes enter the room. Sirius met Regina's eyes and they both laughed softly at this before giving each other another look of uncertainty.

Then – giving Regina one last smile which the blushing woman returned with a tender one of her own, Sirius finally turned his attention to the slowly opening doors of the Great Hall, feeling an elated sense of excitement and nervousness at the pit of his stomach.

Unaware of the way Regina's tender smile and gaze continued to rest on him from his side, he clapped along with the other guests as the line of debutantes began walking gracefully into the room with beautiful smiles on their faces – their heads held up high to meet the awed stares and murmurs of the watching crowd of wizarding society.

Good luck, Prongslet. He thought, his face breaking out into a small grin.

“Don't tell me you're actually nervous?”

Lorraine took a deep intake of breath before she turned to meet Draco's teasing but otherwise reassuring smirk. He offered her his arm, which she took and stepped up right in front of the entrance as the debutante in front of them entered, leaving them next in line.

"Wh—What? Me?? O—Of course not! A Malfoy is never nervous!" She stuttered slightly, giving him a scathing glare before she turned to look at the waiting crowd gathered around the Great Hall, her eyes scanning the sea of faces for a familiar Gryffindor.

Before she could find him, however, Professor McGonagall had spoken out loud again, drawing both Malfoys' attention to the very front of the room.

"Lorraine Catherine Malfoy...Escorted by Draco Lucius Malfoy."

She nearly jumped when Draco tugged gently on her arm to catch her attention. Seeing his smirk, she nodded and began walking with him through the long aisle in the middle of the crowd of guests, easily keeping her chin held up high and her features thoroughly composed into a beautiful smile, matching Draco's elegant stance— both Malfoys presenting themselves and upholding their family name as a perfect picture of sophistication and beauty.

They briefly caught sight of some members of their extended family, as well as Lucius and her father Louis, in the crowd watching them. Both men had proud yet rather cold smiles on their faces as they regarded the other's presence with an observable hostility.

"Looks like Daddy and Uncle Lucius are actually pretending they can tolerate each other's presence for this." She whispered briefly to Draco as he led her to their assigned position on the dance floor where the cotillion would be held once a little later on when all the debutantes had been announced into the room.

Draco matched her amused smile with a wry grin, his eyes moving to meet his father's briefly and nodding respectfully in greeting before turning back to answer her. "Father has always been a tolerant man. He's been going to these horribly dreadful social gatherings for years;

I don't know how he stands it." He told her, causing the girl to giggle at his deadpan voice.

"I thought you liked going to these events, Drac...You like the attention, don't you?" She teased but Draco smirked pointedly at her comment, inclining his head towards the guests as the debutantes after them in line began to be announced further.

"Not...When the attention in this so-called party is supposed to be focused on the debutantes. Not me." He pointed out irritably, causing her to stifle another loud giggle behind her hand as she caught sight of some of the women – as well as a handful of men – staring openly at the incredibly handsome Malfoy heir.

"I can always turn on the veela charm and take everyone's attention off you...What do you say?" She kidded and at that, Draco hastily shook his head and gave her a warning glare.

"I refuse to let you subject yourself to the lustful stares and disgusting thoughts of these people so you'll do no such thing. You're better than that. Now stand up straighter and smile, the family is watching us." He muttered, causing her to tense and immediately look up to meet her father's reprimanding glare.

She hid a wince and gave the blonde man a nervous smile before looking away to grace her other older cousins and family members with an acknowledging nod or wave. Noticing that Draco was doing the same, she sighed inwardly and turned to watch just in time as Anton began walking down the middle aisle with Dionne proudly wrapped around his arm.

"Dionne Halliwell...Escorted by Anton Louis Malfoy."

As soon as Professor McGonagall had announced this, Anton had further regaled the crowd with a hint of his veela charm as he entered, immediately causing them to applause and cheer louder for the handsome half-veela as he entered the room with the grace and ease of an inborn aristocrat.

He smiled charismatically at them, noting with a hint of smugness and satisfaction how all the attention had left Draco and had moved instantly to admire him, watching him as he led Dionne to their position a couple of dancers away from Draco and Lorraine.

When the veela charm over the room had cleared away long enough for McGonagall to clear her throat and announce the next debutante, Anton smiled warmly at Lorraine before turning to wave at their family and give his father a proud, reassuring smirk.

Draco felt his eyes narrow slightly in anger but he simply kept a calm look on his face as he focused his attention instead on the line of debutantes being announced and one by one beginning to join their formation on the large dance floor in the center of the hall.

“Mandy Brocklehurst...Escorted by Blaise Elliot Zabini.”

Looking up amidst another round of applause, he briefly caught the eye of his best friend and gave the other boy a friendly smirk as the Italian heir escorted his beautiful date dressed as Cleopatra to the spot beside them. Blaise gave him a light punch on the shoulder as he passed him, causing the Head Boy to roll his eyes before turning back to watch the entrance.

“You bored yet, Zabini?” He whispered in a low voice to the Slytherin, causing Blaise to smirk and shake his head at his friend’s antics.

“Hardly...The night’s just started, Malfoy...I have a feeling things are going to get interesting a little later on. Knowing you, Anton and your entire family that is.” He drawled, causing Draco to sneer at him in annoyance.

“You’re one to talk. Your Uncle Giovanni is here, you know...So you’d better behave yourself.” He pointed out and at hearing the current family head’s name, Blaise paled slightly and turned to search the crowd to confirm Draco’s words.

At the sight of the Zabini family head, Blaise had the temerity to look nervous and clenched his fists tightly in thought and frustration.

“Damn it...What am I going to do?” He hissed out loud to himself and at seeing this, Draco patted him on the shoulder in amusement.

“Not going to be that bad...Just make sure he doesn’t find out that you’re courting a mudblood and you’ll do fine.” He told him and at hearing his choice of words, Blaise gave him a warning glare, his dark eyes flashing dangerously.

“Don’t call her that. She’s a muggleborn witch. Uncle Giovanni will just have to accept that. It’s about time our family renewed our blood anyway. Besides...You don’t exactly have a right to act all high and mighty...Potter is a half-blood isn’t she?” He pointed out but Draco smirked and shook his head, a superior expression on his face.

“Half-blood rule of exception... Potter is the direct heir to Godric Gryffindor, magical heir to Salazar Slytherin and the only living descendant of the Peverells. Any amount of muggle blood is cancelled out by the sheer strength of the magical blood of her ancestors. It’s exactly why so many goddamn families are trying to infuse her blood into their line – to make their future sons more magically powerful.” He told him, a trace of sarcasm in his voice.

“Marrying her alone and siring an heir with her blood, those pureblood bastards know that they ensure their son as the next successor. The head automatically has to be her son to infuse her blood legacy into the family.” He drawled further, his eyes flashing darkly.

Blaise looked at him in half-confusion, half-amusement. “I know that, Draco. But then why do you, however, sound so irritated at Harry’s theoretical pureblood status?” He whispered back, looking curious.

The blonde Slytherin simply shook his head, looking like he was trying to gather his words. “I...I just don’t want her to think that her blood is the only thing I’m after. I...don’t want her to think I’m not interested in anything other than her. I figured it’s only right since I want her to want me for who I am.” He admitted, drawing Lorraine’s smile at him as she heard his words.



“I’ve never heard you speak of anyone with such affection before, Coco. Not even for Elisa...It’s so sweet...” She told him softly, causing Draco’s eyes to narrow at Elisa’s name.

Fortunately, both Blaise and Lorraine were saved from a round of Draco’s anger when Professor McGonagall suddenly announced a familiar name, causing Blaise’s gaze to snap back at the Great Hall entrance in realization.

“Hermione Isabel Granger...Escorted by Viktor Mikhail Krum.”

Smirking, Draco looked up and followed his best friend’s gaze to the beautiful, smiling brunette across the hall – raising an eyebrow as he took in the girl’s softer, innocent beauty and very simple yet classic gown of ocean blue.

The gown she wore was asymmetrical – supported by her left shoulder and showing an ample yet sophisticated amount of the smooth skin just below her right. It wrapped itself perfectly against her petite, slender form, emphasizing her trim arms, slim waist and slender hips while trailing downwards into a long, flowing skirt.

Watching the girl walk closer towards them, the two Slytherins smirked as they noted the daringly sexy high slit of her skirt ending a good couple of inches above her knee and allowing a tantalizing view of her smooth legs as she walked. Her hair was held up with a simple white and gold ribbon, her long, lustrous brown strands left to cascade into graceful waves down her back which exposed by the daringly low cut back portion of her gown.

Smiling as Viktor led her into their position a couple of dancers behind Blaise, Hermione held up a white and gold mask which, upon closer inspection, was actually weaved – symbolic of Athena, the goddess of heroic endeavor as well as the patroness of weaving and crafts.

Observing the flurry of emotions coursing through Blaise’s face – from dumbstruck awe to intense desire to admiration – Draco tried not to laugh out loud as he saw the irate expression on Mandy’s face. She tugged persistently on Blaise’s arm, turning his attention back to

her and causing him to scowl in annoyance before yanking his arm free.

“What?!” He snapped, causing her eyes to narrow in feminine indignation.

“You are my escort, that’s what! You’re not supposed to be staring at Hermione Granger! She isn’t even pureblood!” She raged but Blaise simply sneered at her, an eyebrow lifting haughtily as he took in the furious flush on her face.

“She acts more like a pureblood with elegance than you do, that’s for sure.” He told her spitefully, shaking his head in disgust before turning back to gaze at the Head Girl. Hermione smiled at him and waved briefly, which he easily returned with a fluttering feeling in his chest.

Viktor Krum didn’t look amused by this little exchange and promptly pulled her away to talk to some of his Bulgarian friends in the crowd, causing Blaise to clench his jaw in annoyance.

“Pansy Parkinson...Escorted by Malcolm Pellerin.”

“I wonder where he is...” Lorraine had whispered to herself. Hurriedly tearing his eyes away from Pansy’s scandalously revealing red Aphrodite gown, Draco turned to glare suspiciously at his female cousin – an eyebrow raised in query.

“Where...who is...Lorraine?” He drawled carefully, his eyes narrowing further when he noticed Lorraine’s blush as she hastily tried to provide an answer to his question.

“N—nothing. I—I was just looking for a friend of mine in the crowd.” She assured him, causing Draco to nod but otherwise turn back impatiently to watching the Great Hall entrance in growing anticipation just as Theodore Nott had walked in with Lisa Turpin and McGonagall had announced another pair of names.

“Luna Lovegood...Escorted by George Lancaster.”

“If you’re looking for Philippe, he’s over there beside your father – no doubt already discussing with him possible plans for an arranged marriage between the two of you.” He informed her bluntly, causing Lorraine’s eyes to widen in shock and indignation.

“You’re not serious.”

“Do I look like I’m joking, Lorraine?” He replied in deadpan voice, rolling his eyes and ignoring her desperate look at him as the female Malfoy scanned the room caught a glimpse of the handsome, brown-haired boy talking to her father.

Seeing her looking at him, Philippe glanced up and gave her a half-hearted wave of acknowledgment, sneering slightly as his eyes trailed themselves over her gown and lingered themselves on her curves.

“Ugh...Merlin, I can’t marry that self-righteous, pompous brat! He looks at me like I’m a bloody piece of meat and he treats me like I’m inferior to him!” She complained, looking at Draco who merely smirked in response – obviously only half-listening.

“He happens to be a friend of mine...He’s very intelligent and charismatic, Lorraine. I think you’ll find that you two have a lot in common. You should give him a chance. A match between his family and ours would be monumental.” He responded automatically, failing to see the crestfallen look on her face.

“But...I don’t like him...I’m...” Her voice trailed off as she looked at Philippe again, watching as he and her father burst into a hearty round of laughter before turning to look at her – both of them nodding and smirking.

Feeling her heart plummet to the floor, she turned to Draco again who was now growling to himself in impatience, his eyes twitching as they continued to glare at the Great Hall entrance in anticipation of the one debutante he had actually come to see that very evening.

“Lavender Brown...Escorted by Ronald Bilius Weasley.”

Lorraine blinked in surprise and turned around to see Ron escorting a girl she didn't really recognize wearing a Juliet costume down the middle aisle toward them. An awkward and humiliated flush was on the redheaded boy's face as he heard the entire Weasley family standing up and offering him a cheering ovation much to the disdainful sneers of many of the other pureblooded families—her own included.

She, however, couldn't help but smile and giggle fondly as she caught sight of Ron's mother and father cheering loudly for him while Ron's brothers were equally rambunctious – standing on the chairs of their tables and whistling their appreciation.

Turning to look at her own family, her smile instantly faded when she saw the absolute look of disgust and disapproval on her father's face and the look of cold indifference on Lucius'. Looking up to see Draco's own sneer directed towards Ron – which the Gryffindor met with an easy glare of dislike – Lorraine's gaze dropped to the floor.

“Draco...?”

He turned to meet her gaze, looking concerned at the expression he saw in her eyes. “What's wrong? Are you feeling well, we can sit down while we wait for the rest of the debutantes if you like.” He offered but she shook her head and pushed his arm away.

“Susan Bones...Escorted by Ernie MacMillan.”

“Was there ever a time when...I don't know...you were...ashamed of being a part of the Malfoy family?” She asked him uncertainly but Draco was looking at her as though she was insane, his eyes going wide with disbelief.

“What?!”

Laughing hastily to redeem herself, she shook her head and tried to choose her words more carefully. “I—I mean...Was there ever a time when you wanted to get away from it all? The prestige...The traditions...The formality...You know, just—”

“Daphne Greengrass...Escorted by Nicholas Rickman.”

“—have fun...Like everyone else. Just be a normal wizarding family...Not the Malfoys but just any normal family without all the rules.” She continued but unfortunately, Draco was no longer listening to her as his eyes had riveted themselves to the end of the Hall, the harsh silver in them melting into an almost trembling, gentle gray.

“Jillian Aimee Potter...Escorted by Neville Patrick Longbottom.”

Is she...real...?

For the first time in his life, Draco Malfoy found himself completely unable to say or think of anything at that precise moment. He couldn't even breathe. Instead, all he found himself capable of doing was staring silently and stupidly into the ethereal vision in front of him – his jaw open slightly in speechless stupor and his eyes glassy as he willed himself not to blink lest the image in front of him faded and disappeared from his sight forever.

Admiration nor desire was not even half the feeling he could use to describe what he felt as he watched her enter the room. She smiled uncertainly, unaware as to why the entire Hall had fallen into a deathly silent daze of pure unbridled admiration at her exquisite beauty.

It was pure and utter humility.

He trembled slightly as he watched her approach him, feeling completely humbled and overwhelmed by her very presence that he couldn't even consider himself worthy to approach her nor even look at her. He felt hopelessly weak and dismal and he shakily clenched his hands into tight fists, his fingernails burying into his soft palm.

He finally allowed his eyes to travel in an agonizingly slow movement from her exquisite face down to her gown and he felt a dangerous lurching of his traitorous male body, desperately struggling with himself as he fought to keep a hold on his senses.

Her gown was made of the purest green silk and was both elegantly and torturously sexy – a flawless adaptation of the way Draco had always thought of her. It hung on from her slender shoulders by thin straps before the bodice split itself into two separate, strips of cloth that intersected into a seductive cross just above her belly button, showing a teasing amount of her trim stomach and the sides of her waist. The strips attached themselves to the beautiful, flowing skirt that fell gracefully down her long, endless legs.

The silk of her skirt looked sheer enough to meld themselves to the shape of her hips and the slender curves of her legs but still left a lot to the imagination – much to the interest of many of the pureblooded suitors and olderfamily heads who were watching the beautiful Gryffindor with gaping jaws as she walked past them.

Persephone...He thought silently, a fond look in his eyes as he took in the silver crown of grain sheaves on her head, the half-mask she held to her face and the resemblance of her make-up to the appearance of the mythical goddess of the underworld, the wife and consort of Hades.

When she had turned around briefly so that Neville could escort her to their position near the center of the dance floor, Draco caught sight of the pale, tantalizing skin of her naked back and he nearly moaned out loud in total surrender to his desire, submitting himself to the unbelievable power she unknowingly had over him completely.

At that moment in his life, he would have crawled on his hands and knees on a path of broken glass and coal if it meant he could touch her. He had never seen anyone radiating so much beauty in his life and he knew everyone else in the room were sharing his thoughts as the murmurs and loud noises had stopped briefly when Jaimee had entered only to start up again in an uproar of excited whispering.

She was so unbelievably sexy and gorgeous at that moment and Draco realized, with a small smirk to himself, that she wasn't even aware of it or perhaps, did not even care and looked around the Great Hall in utter confusion – shooting all the other bachelors an irritated and threatening look.

He watched as she self-consciously bit her lip and tried to hide her face at the onslaught of reporters and photographers that had suddenly begun snapping away at her with photographs, causing her to wince further in annoyance as she shielded her eyes from the flash.

Seeing this, Draco felt a low protective growl rising from his chest and he would have stalked over to the photographers to shove their cameras down their throats but something a couple of meters near him caught his eye and he reluctantly pulled his gaze away from Jaimee to see that even Anton seemed to be at a complete loss for words – gaping stupidly at Jaimee with an expression of admiration and unhidden captivation clearly etched onto his features.

Draco instantly felt a sickening feeling of apprehension and jealousy when he saw this and his hand tightened briefly around Lorraine's, causing the blonde to wince and pull it away from his grasp in annoyance but the Slytherin didn't notice, keeping his suspicious glare on Anton.

The male half-veela was looking intently at Jaimee with a dark, penetrating expression of want for a long moment before his face had formed into a self-satisfied smirk almost as though he had recalled a private joke in his mind that nobody else knew about.

She's mine, you bastard. Keep your damn eyes to yourself. I won't let you take her. Draco growled, his entire form seething with anger as he turned and directed his attention to the boy at Jaimee's side, growing even angrier as he caught sight of Neville Longbottom's beaming smile as he waved at his friends and family watching in the crowd.

Longbottom...That stupid, bumbling idiot. How could Potter have chosen him over me? He mocked silently in his head, a low possessive growl escaping his throat as his eyes burned a hole right through the arm that Neville had placed briefly on Jaimee's bare back as he leaned down and whispered something to her, causing her to laugh lightly.

Draco smirked, however, when Jaimee seemed to have missed a step in her high heels and stumbled clumsily backwards. Almost

immediately, a group of pureblooded males had rushed forward and it wasn't until Theodore Nott had succeeded in catching her in his arms that the groaning males had returned to their scowling, glaring debutante dates.

Feeling another strong surge of jealousy as Draco glared at the offending hand Nott was unnecessarily still letting linger on the back curve of her waist but he soon smirked again in satisfaction when Jaimee had hastily thanked him and pushed him back with an irritated and knowing expression on her face.

The other debutantes didn't take too kindly to Jaimee accidentally diverting everyone's attention from them and in particular, Pansy Parkinson expressed her indignation by making a loud, scathing comment about Jaimee's little clumsy moment and causing the other debutantes to laugh mockingly in amusement.

"She's certainly a delight, isn't she? The girl you'll be forced to marry should you fail during this season." Lorraine drawled from beside him, watching as Pansy continued to spit out several more mocking insults at Jaimee but the Gryffindor seemed more than amused by this and simply ignored her, talking to a nervous Neville in an obvious attempt to calm him down.

Draco winced at her words, keeping his flashing eyes heavily trained on the hand Neville was now shakily placing on the exposed back curve of Jaimee's waist as all the debutantes and their escorts began readying themselves into dancing positions for the cotillion.

"I will never marry that woman...I don't care if she's the direct descendant of whomever, nothing is making me touch her let alone procreate with her." He told her firmly, causing Lorraine to giggle in amusement.

"Jaimee's really gorgeous, though isn't she? I'm actually jealous...I'd need to use my veela charm in order to make an entire room of men look at me like that...She does it without even realizing it." She gushed, sighing as she turned to admire the dark-haired debutante's appearance.



He finally let his eyes off Jaimee and turned to focus on Lorraine, already missing the sight of the Gryffindor's breathtaking smile. "Yes...She's amazing. But don't ever forget that you are too." He agreed softly, poking her playfully on the nose before her hand in his and fixing them into a dancing position as well.

They waited as the band started playing an upbeat, waltz music before the guests around them erupted into a round of encouraging applause and cheers. Forcing a smile on his face, Draco took Lorraine's waist and began leading her in a perfect, graceful waltz around the dance floor, the two of them catching glimpses of the couples dancing and swaying around them and matching their steps simultaneously as they moved.

As Draco spun her around, Lorraine caught a glimpse of Ron a couple of feet behind them and she gave him a friendly smile but he returned it with an open-jawed staring at her, a blush rising on his face. Before she could see anything else, Draco had spun her to face him again and they continued to waltz around the dance floor, passing the admiring gazes and glances of many of the watching guests and photographers.

The dance was perfectly choreographed, allowing the guests to see each pair swaying within an even distance from one another while at the same time moving around the dance floor with ease and fluidity, all the girls' skirts swishing around gracefully with each turn.

Resting his lazy gaze on the sea of watching guests, Draco nodded briefly in greeting when he saw several of his pureblooded friends who in turn, raised their wine glasses up at him in acknowledgment. Just as he had spun Lorraine around again, his eyes hardened when they rested on a familiar face watching him carefully on the crowd.

Elisa Cartwright...He thought suspiciously, his eyes narrowing when he caught sight of the dark-haired girl in an exquisite Helen of Troy costume in the crowd of guests looking uncertainly at him with pleading green eyes and looking just as deceitfully beautiful as Draco remembered her.

She managed a small smile at him and immediately winced when Draco simply sneered back and tore his gaze away, feeling nothing more than a bitter disgust welling up in his throat at the mere thought or sight of her. She had played him like a complete fool and he couldn't believe he had been stupid enough to fall prey to her manipulative charm.

He realized more than ever now that he hadn't even loved at her at all but what he had felt for the girl at the time had been a speculative attraction due to how remarkably similar her green eyes were to Harry's, foolishly hoping that the similarity extended to her actual personality.

However, he knew now that her personality was simply one of dishonesty and materialism and he'd be damned if he ever let himself be played by her again. She was nothing like Harry and he was the one foolish enough to have ever believed there would ever be anyone in this world who was like the one person he had wanted from the very moment he had seen him in Madam Malkin's shop.

Draco smirked to himself as he caught a glimpse of Anton who had paled slightly at seeing Elisa in the crowd but recovered himself quickly and gave the girl a handsome, otherwise dismissive smile.

If anything, he should even be thanking Anton for having opened his eyes to the truth about the manipulative slut. Otherwise, he would have ended up marrying her and that would have made him miss out on the best thing that could have happened in his life.

With that thought in mind, Draco looked over at Jaimee and his eyes instantly softened as he caught sight of her bright smile as she laughed at something Neville had said before he spun her around, allowing Draco an appreciative view of her long, gorgeous legs.

I suppose...It's always been you then...huh, Harry? Just you... He realized silently, smiling once more to himself before looking away and continuing to lead his cousin gracefully around the sea of dancers and losing himself further in his thoughts.

I'll make you mine, Persephone...

"Have they stopped staring now...?" Jaimee hissed under her breath as Neville led them in a slow, graceful waltz near the center of the dance floor. Peering over the girl's shoulder, Neville held back a laugh and shook his head, causing her to groan loudly again.

"You can't blame them, Harry...You're really gorgeous. I mean, I'm not just saying that because you're my date and or because you're my friend and everything but you really are...hot! I mean... Phew. Did you see the way everyone was looking at you, I mean wow-"

"Neville." Jaimee interrupted his rant, an amused smirk on her face as she gave him a pointed stare that indicated for him to slow and calm himself down before he brought himself into another nervous breakdown.

"You're rambling."

He looked at her with a sheepish smile and shook himself to clear his thoughts. "I—I'm sorry, Harry. I just didn't like all the attention focused on us like that." He admitted and Jaimee merely gave a laugh, a slightly bitter anger in her eyes.

"Yeah, well welcome to my life."

At seeing Neville's embarrassed, apologetic look at her, she instantly felt guilty for the tone she had used and turned to give him bright smile. "Anyway...Remember, it's just me Neville. You're with Harry at a debutante ball and I'm in a bloody gown so it should be funny and not intimidating at all." She reminded him, causing him to smile and nod his understanding.

He spun her around again and at that moment, Jaimee caught a quick glance of her godfather in the crowd of guests nearby laughing and chatting with a beautiful, friendly-looking redheaded woman she didn't recognize. Seeing her wide teasing smirk directed at him, Sirius immediately colored and turned hastily to give her an overenthusiastic wave.

Well, well...The night's just begun and Sirius is already making some moves. She thought to herself, chuckling under her breath. She hadn't seen him during her insufferable walk down the middle aisle. She and Neville had been the last couple to position themselves on the dance floor and while she was searching the crowd for her godfather, she had instead caught sight of many of her past suitors gaping at her and staring at her in both fear and intimidation.

She chuckled to herself as she recalled Bartholomew Rowland's look of horror directed towards her as well as the scrutinizing look the large bachelor had given her as his eyes inspected her female body in an obvious search for her male remains – growing more and more frustrated when all he was met with was creamy, porcelain skin and womanly curves.

Feeling a little mischievous, she had winked flirtatiously at him, causing him to pale even further and turn away hastily only to be met with the wine glass of the elderly woman beside him, successfully splashing himself in the face.

It had also been amusing to see Lucian McConway wince at the very sight of her and hurriedly back away into another group of bachelors behind him, causing him to stumble rather ungracefully to the floor as he tried to get away.

Her amusement soon faded, however, as soon as she noticed the silently gaping looks and lustful stares she was receiving from half of the inhabitants of the entire hall and when she had asked Neville what was wrong, he had simply looked at her as though she was insane.

she had never felt more self-conscious in her life. She had hurriedly led Neville over to the dance floor, feeling incredibly harassed as though all the men in the room were undressing her with their eyes and she was powerless to stop it.

The truth was, she did feel incredibly naked in her gown and though as a guy, she could learn to appreciate the subtle sexiness of her

attire, it was a completely different feeling altogether when she was actually the one wearing it in front of hundreds of watching eyes.

She had never worn anything like this before in her entire life and now she was wearing it in front of an entire crowd. More than anything, she felt like running back to her room, throwing on an overlarge t-shirt and shorts and freaking comfortable shoes to replace her annoyingly painful heels before racing back here and reclaiming her position.

What was even more unfortunate was that she knew that was exactly what those men were thinking and to have to experience this made her feel ridiculously guilty as to the times she had lustfully stared at a woman several times in the past. She felt more like a specimen being put under a microscope than ever before – it was even worse now than when she had been Harry Potter, the boy-who-lived and savior of the wizarding world. Now she was a naked specimen being put under a more powerful microscope.

Her nervousness, however, had disappeared the minute she looked up and was met with image of a humbled, openly trembling Draco Malfoy staring at her as though he was looking into the very image of a transcendent presence – his eyes shimmering in unbridled admiration and the expression on his face one of surrender– of offering himself to her.

It had melted her defenses completely and she would have smiled back but it seemed almost as though nothing was processing through the head boy's mind at that particular moment and he continued to stare, unblinking and unmoving. Unsure of how to respond and not wanting anyone to notice the intense blush that had risen to her cheeks; she dropped her gaze from him and settled on looking around the room.

Ron had rewarded her with a grin and a thumbs-up sign, causing her to grin back at him when she noticed that he was actually escorting Lavender Brown. She had also received a gushing smile from Hermione who was beaming and waving merrily at her from just a couple of dancers nearby. Jaimee smiled when she noticed how

incredibly beautiful Hermione looked in her gown and waved back, nodding briefly with a smirk to Viktor Krum beside her.

The Weasley family, upon seeing her gaze on them, had all cheered rather loudly and Fred and George had expressed their acknowledgment by making continuous wolf whistles at her – causing Jaimee to redden further and glare halfheartedly at their audacity.

Unfortunately, just when she had felt her self-confidence beginning to return to her, she had managed to add further to her public humiliation when she actually tripped on her ridiculously high and painful heels and had stumbled ungracefully backwards towards the floor.

Before Neville could even think of catching her, she had been met with a flurry of male bachelors rushing forward to help her and while she had felt an incredibly strong urge to beat the crap out of all of them, she settled for narrowing her eyes when Theodore Nott had caught her and steadied her back on her feet.

When the Slytherin's hand had continued to rest suspiciously on curve of her waist, caressing the creamy skin of her back, Jaimee had growled under her breath. She knew exactly what was on his mind so she had slapped the offending hand away before biting out a thank you in acknowledgment.

"Harry? Are you okay? Are you still embarrassed because of Pansy Parkinson's teasing of your clumsy moment awhile ago?" Neville suddenly asked, breaking through Jaimee's deep thoughts and she turned to face him in surprise and amusement.

"What? Parkinson? No...That wasn't it...I was just running through my head exactly what happened a couple of moments ago when we walked in. It seemed almost like it wasn't real." She admitted, rolling her eyes when Neville had twirled her around again before responding.

"Good, because if you must know...The main reason girls make fun of each other is because they're jealous. I learned that from my grandmother. She told me about how women can be spiteful in that

sense.” He told her, reddening in embarrassment when Jaimee looked at him with a surprised smirk.

“Really...? Women do that to each other? Why?” She asked, curious as she let her eyes travel to the other debutantes in the room, nearly all of which were leveling her with scathing glares and narrowed eyes every now and then as they danced.

Neville shrugged, looking just as confused as she was. “I don’t know...I think it’s a self-image thing...You know, wanting to have all the attention in the room? I’m not entirely sure though.” He answered, causing Jaimee to shrug in acceptance of his answer.

“Women are a strange, vindictive species...” She muttered under her breath but Neville heard her and laughed, nodding his agreement. “Yes, they are...That’s probably why both Seamus and Dean finally decided to out themselves and go with each other instead.” He informed her and at hearing this, Jaimee’s eyes widened and she looked at him in both shock and amusement.

“No way?! Seriously?” She exclaimed and at seeing him nod, she fell into a round of laughter, shaking her head in disbelief. “I can’t believe they finally admitted how they felt for each other...It’s about time too, I was really getting tired of Seamus hitting on me all the time and unknowingly making Dean jealous.” She told him, causing Neville to make a face.

“You knew..? All this time? H—How?” Neville asked, his voice cracking but Jaimee just rolled her eyes at his ignorance. “Oh please...It was obvious, Neville. Those two are meant for each other...I knew it was only a matter of time.” She told him, choosing at that moment to wave to the two Gryffindors in question who waved back happily in response.

“Merlin’s beard...” Neville murmured, shaking his head at himself, lifting Jaimee up gently by the waist and twirling them around simultaneously with the other dancers before setting her back down and leading her back into a waltz once more.

“By the way, Jaimee...don’t take this the wrong way or anything but I honestly have to ask you...” Neville began and at hearing his uncertain tone of voice, Jaimee turned to look at him with raised, expectant eyebrows.

The boy cleared his throat before answering – pointing to her crown of sheaves and green gown. “I think you look incredibly beautiful as the goddess Aphrodite but wouldn’t it be more appropriate if you had chosen a pink or red gown? I know green brings out your eyes and all but...I mean, Aphrodite is the goddess of love after all.” He commented and Jaimee felt her left eye twitch slightly in irritation at his misunderstanding.

Slowly raising her half-mask up at him to show him the additional sheaves of grain embedded onto it, she forced herself to explain in an agitated voice. “Neville...Look at this. Sheaves of grain. I am not Aphrodite...I am Persephone. Goddess of the underworld, the embodiment of the Earth’s fertility. I am not the goddess of freaking love and beauty.” She told him, growling out the last sentence with disgust.

Neville gulped nervously at the expression on her face, looking embarrassed. “O—Oh! Hehe...I’m sorry Harry, I guess I never did know much about Greek mythology or the Greek pantheon...Uhm, my mistake.” He rushed out, relaxing when the legendary temper extinguished from Harry’s eyes.

“So...Uhm...What’s Persephone’s story? Why did you choose her?” He asked her but the girl didn’t seem to be listening to him anymore. Her attention was focused on something over his shoulder. Turning to follow her gaze, Neville caught sight of the rather nasty glare emanating from Luna’s features directed towards Jaimee, which the girl smirked at in response.

Then directing her gaze back at him, Jaimee gave him a knowing wink. “What was it you had told me about girls awhile ago, Neville? Something about jealousy...?” She asked him, causing Neville to give her a confused look.



"I don't understand, Harry. What do you mean?" He asked, looking from her smirking face to Luna's disheartened expression while furrowing his eyebrows together in a concerned crease.

Jaimee grinned widely, a mischievous glint in her eye as she beckoned for him to move closer so she could whisper something in his ear. "I know exactly how to get Luna to admit her feelings for you tonight...But you'll have to do everything I say from this point onward. Will you agree to it?" She asked, a superior grin on her face.

Neville looked slightly apprehensive but nodded anyway, interested to see what the girl was planning. At seeing his agreement, Jaimee's grin became seductive and she leaned in closer to him to whisper something in his ear again.

"Move your hand lower down my back." She told him, causing him to choke and blush darker in protest. "B-But then my hand would be almost touching your ars—"

"Just do it, Longbottom!" She snapped and immediately, Neville gulped and lowered his trembling hand to a mere inch above her rounded bottom, wincing further when he instantly noticed the dark, menacing glaring of Draco Malfoy a couple of dancers ahead of them.

"H—Harry, I d—don't think I want to do this..." He stammered, smiling nervously at the way Draco seemed to be baring his teeth at him like a wolf protecting its territory— and at that, Neville suddenly realized that Malfoy's animagus form was, in fact, a Siberian wolf. Unfortunately, this did little to soothe his fear.

"H—Harry, I r—really think this isn't such a g—good idea—"

"Hush, Neville! I know what I'm doing. Lovegood's watching and if girls are as jealous as you say they are, she'll be over here in no time." A blissfully oblivious Jaimee told him with a hint of smugness, this time grabbing his other hand and positioning it in the same area just barely touching her rear.

Neville painfully swallowed the lump in his throat, noting the way Draco was baring his teeth again, and his silver eyes were blazing

with fury. He watched as the blonde Slytherin he had been terrified of since their first year of Hogwarts shook his head very slowly and warningly at him, his eyes narrowing as though in a silent dare for him to do anything else.

“Y—You don’t understand, Harry...I really don’t want to...die...” He had squeaked the last word out in a ridiculously high voice, causing Harry raise an eyebrow to peer at him in concern.

“Are you alright, Neville? You look like you’re about to faint.” She observed briefly before grinning again and turning to see Luna ignoring her date altogether and watching them with dread clearly etched onto her blue eyes.

“She’s buying it! Hah! Now lean in close to me as though you’re going to kiss me. Hurry up, do it!” She hissed at him but at hearing her words, Neville promptly choked and hastily shook his head, looking at her as though she was insane.

“Are you crazy?! I will not! I actually want to live to have a family, Harry! Now—”

“Quit being a wuss and just do it, Longbottom!”

Neville turned his head slightly to his side to see Draco still watching them closely, his eyes narrowed as he and his debutante date began to dance in their direction. Feeling his palms beginning to sweat, he turned to glare at Jaimee again who was looking at him in impatience.

“Do you want to catch Luna’s attention or not?! Hurry up—”

“Harry! I am not suicidal enough to – ”

“Excuse me...Uhm...Harry?”

Both Neville and Jaimee jumped – Jaimee in surprise and Neville in terror – and looked up from their argument into the nervous smile of Luna, who had approached them with her escort and was now looking between the two of them in uncertainty.

“I—I was wondering...Would it be alright if I cut in? George, here...He’s really interested in meeting you and asking you how it feels to be able to stare at your female body naked in front of a mirror.” She said in her usual dazed, deadpan voice, causing her escort to glare at her in humiliation and confusion.

“Luna! Huh?! I never said that! I did? I—I mean, I do! I really do! Miss Potter, would you please do me the honor of dancing with me?” He hastily corrected himself at seeing Luna’s pointed glare at him, still blushing in humiliation as he offered his hand to Jaimee.

“I’m sure that will prove to be an interesting conversation. Certainly, George.” Jaimee caught on easily, turning to give Neville a superior, pointed smirk before she took the other boy’s hand and eased herself out of Neville’s arms. The latter boy was blushing profusely as he took Luna’s hand and began guiding her into a slow waltz around the dance floor, pausing only to look back and give Jaimee a small, grateful smile.

She returned it with a wink, smiling softly when she noticed how Luna had rested her head against Neville’s shoulder within a couple of minutes of dancing until both teenagers were swaying gently against the music and looking completely contented in each other’s arms.

As soon as they were out of Jaimee and George’s earshot, Luna looked up and gave Neville a speculative glance which the Gryffindor returned with a self-conscious, uncertain smile. “What...? Do I have something in my teeth?” He asked in embarrassment.

Luna gave him a peculiar smile, shaking her head before she answered him a blunt, direct question. “Were you and Harry trying to make me jealous, Neville?” She spoke curiously, tilting her head and staring at him with an expectant expression.

Hearing her words, Neville’s face instantly colored and he coughed loudly before forcing out a laugh. “Wh—What? Haha...What ever made you think that, Luna? Don’t joke around like—”

“I was just curious...Draco Malfoy was staring at you with absolute murder in his eyes while Harry was shoving your hands toward her

arse. I was only drawing my own assumptions. Am I correct then?" She asked in a calm, casually inquiring voice again, watching Neville's face redden further as he stammered his next words.

"Th—That is...I—"

"It worked, you know."

Blinking in surprise, he looked up and saw the beautiful, otherwise slightly hesitant smile on Luna's face as she stared at up at his eyes. Managing a smile in return, he gave her a confused look that prompted her to explain further.

"I was jealous of Jaimee, you see... But not in the way you were thinking. I was jealous because you are her escort for the evening." She told him, causing Neville's eyebrows to shoot up in surprise.

"You wanted me to escort you? But what about George? I thought you liked him...?" He asked but at his words, Luna had giggled softly to herself in amusement.

"George? I thought I told you Neville...He's a family friend... He's even engaged to be married this month to another friend of mine." She told him, still giggling when she saw the look of sheepish expression on his face.

Feeling a bit idiotic, he shook his head at himself before allowing a smile at her laughing expression. "I—I'm sorry...I guess I jumped to my own conclusions and misread things all wrong..." He began, biting his lips as he tried to think of the right words.

Luna seemed to have more to say, however, and she paused as Neville twirled her around. When he caught her in his arms, she turned around to face him with a serious expression on her face. "Do you like me, Neville Longbottom?" She asked in her rather weird, casual tone of voice again.

He surprised her he seemed to pale and his eyes went to focus on her radish-shaped earrings. His answer came in a stammering, raspy

voice. “Y—Yes...I do.” He admitted, his eyes still following the movement of her earrings.

She looked confused and peered into his face, directing his gaze back to her baffled expression. “Why are you staring at my earrings? Do I have pixies hanging off them again?” She asked incredulously but at her words, Neville broke out into a choked-up, affectionate laugh.

He shook his head hastily, still laughing. “N—No...Sorry, I’m rather nervous right now...I didn’t really know how to respond to your question.” He told her, causing her gaze to soften as she gave him a sincere smile.

“If you liked me, Neville...Why didn’t you just tell me? Why didn’t you just ask me right away if you could escort me...? I would have said yes, you know.” She told him but Neville gave her a look as though she was insane, his eyes wide in uncertainty.

“B—But...I couldn’t! I didn’t know how you’d react you see...We’ve been friends for so long now and I thought that if I told you how I felt, things would get weird and you ‘d start avoiding me...A—And—”

“Do you know that muggle Eskimos kiss by rubbing their noses together?”

Once again – like so many times before in the course of their friendship – Neville found himself stopping midsentence and staring at the slightly weird Ravenclaw with a mixture of confusion, disbelieving uncertainty and helpless amusement.

“Uhm...What?” He asked, blinking rapidly at the blonde girl as he tried to interpret her rather odd words but Luna had simply smiled at him, her pale cheeks flush with anticipation as she leaned forward and gently rubbed her nose against his, causing the Gryffindor to blush darkly at the cute, affectionate action.

“Uhm...I—Uh...I’m...Luna, I—”

When he couldn't seem to find the right words to say, Luna spoke up for him, leaning forward and resting her cheek decidedly on his shoulder. "I think...I like you too, Neville...Even though you're squeaky, stutter a lot, try to make me jealous with girls that used to be boys and kind of a weird." She murmured casually, sighing and melting against him. In spite of himself, Neville found himself amused at her ever-present bluntness and wrapped his arms around her, pulling her close.

"I think you're adorably, wonderfully, and beautifully weird too, Luna...Even you blurt out the most horribly random and blunt things at the worst possible moments..." He said teasingly, the two of them trailing off into a comfortable silence as they wrapped their arms around each other and began swaying more tenderly amidst the upbeat music with content, happy smiles on their faces.

Turning to look at her new dance partner, Jaimee offered the boy disarming grin. "So...George... What's your story?" She asked him curiously, causing the boy's tense shoulders to relax at the friendly tone in her voice.

"Well...For one thing, what Luna said was a complete lie. I most certainly did not want to ask you that..." He began and at hearing this, Jaimee instantly giggled in amusement. "I know, don't worry...Lovegood tends to say random things like that all the time. It's her nature, really. I meant...Where are you from? Why are you here?" She asked, pausing when he twirled her around.

Watching as the other students as well as some of the older wizarding couples began to lead each other onto the dance floor while several of the debutantes and their escorts began to sit down onto their assigned tables, George paused for a moment to gather his thoughts.

"Well...I'm actually just here to escort Luna...As for where I'm from, I just graduated from Beauxbatons Academy last year and I'm engaged to be married sometime this month." He told her and at hearing this, Jaimee grinned at him and patted him on the shoulder.

“Wow...Congratulations then! So who’s the lucky girl? How and when did you meet her?” She asked curiously, genuinely interested and highly relieved that she was actually dancing with a guy that wasn’t interested in courting her.

George grinned at her question, twirling her around again before responding. “We were classmates in dueling class...She was the top student in the class while I was basically struggling.” He admitted and at hearing this, Jaimee smirked at him in disbelief.

“So how did you get here to notice you then, mate?” She asked, causing him to blush slightly and laugh. “Well...I studied hard...I challenged her to a duel...And I beat her. And after that, she seemed to pay more attention to me.” He told her, chuckling at the awed expression on her face.

“That’s so wicked...Well congratulations, mate...I hope you’re happy with her.” She told him, giving him another genuine smile which the boy returned instantly, nodding his acceptance.

“Thank you, Miss Potter...Oh and by the way, you look very beautiful tonight. I understand why they have named you the prime of this hunting season.” He complimented and she rolled her eyes, brushing away the compliment just as they stopped dancing when McGonagall began announcing that dinner was about to start.

“That’s just another way of saying I’m the juiciest piece of meat here. In any case, it has honestly been a pleasure to meet you, George. I hope you and your fiancé are very happy together.” She told him, smiling when George bowed in response and planted a kiss on the back of her hand before walking off to join his friends near the refreshment table.

Taking a hint from this, she walked over to the refreshment table to get a drink for herself as well – stopping just beside a dark-haired, handsome wizard who had just finished pouring himself a glass of champagne. Seeing her standing there, however, the young man had turned and looked at her in brief surprise before giving her a formal, charming smile.

“Ah...Miss Potter... Or should I say Aphrodite? It astounds me to see such an exquisite debutante such as yourself getting your own drink. Shouldn't your escort be in charge of that?” He asked her, still smiling and allowing her to see perfect rows of white teeth as he handed her his drink instead.

She bit back her irritation at having been mistaken for Aphrodite again; shaking her head as she thought of how clueless these pureblooded idiots seemed to be that they associated any beautiful Grecian debutante gown with a crown to immediately be Aphrodite.

Brushing her annoyance aside, she took the glass with a grateful smile, taking a sip before answering his question. “Unfortunately, I seem to have lost my escort.” She admitted, smiling again as she turned and caught sight of Neville and Luna still dancing together and laughing to themselves in the middle of the dance floor.

“But I actually prefer it that way. I'm Har—Jaimee, by the way...You are...?” She inquired, raising an eyebrow at him. He inclined his head and took her gloved hand in his, giving it a customary kiss on the back of her palm before replying.

“Philippe Winchester, heir and only son to Peter Winchester – president of Winchester Investments. It is an honor to meet you.” He drawled, causing her lips to twitch slightly in amusement at the arrogant way he had introduced himself and how he had managed to emphasize his family name to her three times in a single sentence.

Taking a page from his book, she inclined her head towards him as well, quirking her lips into a wry smile. “Well, I am Jillian Aimee Potter – formerly known as Harry James Potter of the Potter family. The pleasure is mine.” She answered, hiding a smirk when she noticed the slight irritation in his eyes at her mocking gesture.

Before neither of them could say anything else, the fair-haired bachelor behind him spoke up as well – causing both Jaimee and Philippe to look up at him in surprise.



“Miss Potter, may I also introduce myself...? My name is Nicholas Fudge, I am the first born son to the Minister of Magic.” He told her, stepping forward and bowing his head toward her in greeting.

Jaimee raised an eyebrow, taking another sip of champagne. “Well, Nicholas...What can I do for you or the Minister, then?” She asked him directly, watching him straighten himself and give her a smile.

“Well, Actually...I would be delighted if you could dance with—”

He never got to finish his sentence as he stopped and groaned in annoyance when he noticed the rather large, forming group of bachelors that were beginning to gather around them in a tight circle – all of which were obviously waiting to introduce themselves to the prime debutante in the center.

Following his gaze, Jaimee stiffened in alarm as she found herself right in the middle of a drooling pack of men who all seemed to be giving her freakishly wide smiles – all of which were squeezing past one another to get closer to her.

Downing her drink in an unladylike gulp, she reached for another one before turning to give Philippe an irritated glare. “First of all...It’s Persephone and not Aphrodite. I swear, you see a Greek-inspired, sexy gown and you instantly conclude me to be Aphrodite. Second of all, I would appreciate it if you guys don’t crowd around me.” She added, glaring at the circle of festering men around her.

One of the men behind her chuckled, drawing her attention to him with narrowed eyes. “Actually, I think most of us came here to ask you for the same thing. I, personally, would like to ask you for a dance later this evening Potter. If that’s alright.” He commented and at hearing his words, the other bachelors nodded and gave her similar, hopeful smiles.

Jaimee merely blinked, raising a single eyebrow. “You...All came here to ask me for a dance...?” She asked slowly, looking unimpressed and not amused as they all nodded.

Merlin, I never noticed how we men are such a pathetic species when it came to women. She thought to herself with a smirk, shaking her head at them before sighing and setting down her glass.

“Alright... You all have one dance then.” She hesitantly agreed but when they continued to squeeze against one another towards her, making the circle tighter and nearly difficult to breathe, her eyes narrowed and she was just about to hex them away from her when she heard a familiar voice breaking through the crowd.

“Alright, alright! Oi! Break it up, all of you! Harry needs to breathe and besides, it’s time for dinner! Get lost, the lot of you!”

Her face breaking out into a grateful smile, she looked up to see Ron shoving his way toward her, stopping in front of her and offering her his arm with a meaningful grin. She took it with a sigh of relief, nodding her exit to both Philippe and Nicholas before she let the redhead pull her away from the crowd towards their assigned table near the band’s stage. Around them, they observed everyone else – including the guests –beginning to sit down and locate their designated dining areas while the band began playing a jazzy tune in the background.

“Well, you owe me for that one mate...I don’t usually do knight in shining armor for my male best friend.” Ron muttered under his breath to her with a chuckle to which Harry grinned back and shook her head in relief. “Don’t worry, Ron...I promise I won’t tell Mrs. Weasley that it was your pack of dirty magazines she found under your bed and not mine.” She told him, causing Ron to color in alarm and glare at her.

“Harry, if you dare to even –”

Jaimee laughed out loud to herself and pulled him towards their table, her smile fading immediately when she caught sight of the other people they would be sharing it with – Hermione Granger and Viktor Krum, Pansy Parkinson and Malcolm Pellerin, Anthony Goldstein and Marietta Edgecombe, Luna Lovegood and George Lancaster and last but not least, Draco and Lorraine Malfoy.

Sighing and avoiding Draco's piercing gaze on her, Jaimee finally sat herself in her seat beside Neville while Ron took the seat beside her next to Lavender. Turning to look at Neville, Jaimee both half-groaned, half-smiled as she noticed how he and Luna were locked in their own private conversation and didn't seem to be noticing anyone else –leaving her to fend completely for herself amidst the throng of other couples surrounding them.

Well...This should be interesting. She thought with a wry grin, shaking her head before busying herself with her bowl of soup in front of her and wincing every now and then as she was forced to listen to Neville and Luna's occasional lovesick conversation and laughter.

A/N: Poor Harry... Her date left her so early on in the night. :insert evil, plotting laughter here: Wahahaha! Don't worry! More coming up soon! I actually had to cut the Debutante Ball into 3 whole chapters since it was too long to fit into one actually. Things get more exciting later on, I promise. :wink: I'm still working on the next two...I promise it will be out soon. In the mean time, why don't you guys help me out with a review? Tell me if you like it thus far! :wink:

## Chapter 18 — Madness, Mayhem, and More Malfoys

“Harry!”

Briefly setting her fork down, Jaimee looked up at Hermione’s hissed whisper to see the head girl pointing frantically at her spoon and giving her a pointed glare that did not go unnoticed by Draco’s amused eyes.

“Eh? What are you pointing at your spoon for, ‘Mione? I have one too, if that’s what you mean.” Jaimee commented out loud, causing Hermione to slap her forehead in exasperation and Pansy, Lavender and Marietta to hide giggles behind their table napkins.

Still looking confused, Jaimee turned to Ron but he was unfortunately too busy noisily slurping his soup away to notice, leaving Jaimee alone to decipher what Hermione could possibly mean. She turned to Neville and Luna but they too, were busy sipping their soup in silence and it wasn’t until she heard an amused voice speak that she looked up to meet Draco’s twinkling silver eyes.

“Potter, I believe what Granger is trying – and failing I might add – to discreetly point out is that you are using a fork for your soup.” Draco drawled out loud, instantly causing Hermione to wince and Jaimee to turn beet red in embarrassment.

Looking even more embarrassed at Pansy and Marietta’s high-pitched giggles, Jaimee shot the smirking blonde a withering glare which he returned with another teasing grin. Her eyes narrowed further when she saw that Krum hiding a smirk behind his wine glass as well, causing her to scowl to herself in indignation.

Inspecting the array of different-sized spoons and forks on the table, Jaimee vaguely tried to recall in her head what McGonagall had told her about using fine dining utensils at formal events. Seeing her hesitation, Lorraine gave Jaimee a small comforting smile before raising up in her hand the correct spoon to use.

“Don’t mind Draco, Jaimee...He’s been staring at you the minute you walked into the hall and has been looking for an excuse for you to

look at him since then.” She told her, wincing in pain when she felt Draco kick her from under the table in annoyance.

Fortunately, both Draco and Jaimee were saved from having to respond to Lorraine’s comment when the band stopped playing momentarily to allow Dumbledore to direct their attention to him again at the very center of the room.

“If I may have everyone’s attention for a moment – I apologize for interrupting our very talented band and our rather scrumptious feast but I promise you, this will only take up a few minutes of your time. By the way, do try the green Jell-O, it’s rather delicious if I may say so—” Dumbledore smiled jovially at Professor McGonagall’s warning look at him before he continued with his speech.

“It gives me great pleasure to announce that here tonight; we have among us one of Hogwarts’ most esteemed former prime debutantes. She has recently come back home from Sicily and joins us here today to regale us with some inspiring words addressed to our own current debutantes about how she herself has blossomed into the lovely, elegant and respectable woman she is today.” He continued, pausing to smile at the on-looking guests watching him from their tables.

“So...Ladies and gentlemen, dear debutantes and honored guests, please welcome Miss Regina Annabelle Vallehan.” He finally announced, joining the cheerful applause of the Great Hall as the beautiful woman Jaimee had recognized Sirius had been talking to stepped up onto the stage with a slightly embarrassed but otherwise glowing smile on her face.

After giving the former prime debutante a kiss on the hand, Dumbledore bowed to her before walking back down the stage to allow the crowd to see Miss Regina as she prepared to deliver her speech. Smiling at the sea of debutante faces looking up at her, she raised her wand to her throat and began to speak.

“Good evening, everyone...I must say, I’m a little embarrassed to be here today after what – nearly seventeen years? It’s been awhile since I myself was a debutante and I can honestly say that there’s not

really much advice I can give..." She started, pausing to look down at her notes.

"Blimey...That woman is gorgeous, she is...She looks like she hasn't aged a day over seventeen." Ron whispered to Jaimee from his seat beside her, causing the girl to nod in agreement with a rueful grin before leaning over to whisper something back.

"I saw her awhile ago...She was talking to Sirius. Maybe they were classmates or something back in Hogwarts." She mused, she and Ron only half-listening as Miss Regina continued to speak with a gracious smile on her elegantly composed features.

Ron gave a low whistle under his breath, popping a piece of bread into his mouth before whispering again. "Whoever she is, she's bloody beautiful. I wonder who she ended up marrying during her season...I figured he would be the richest bloke who asked her out during the time." He thought out loud, immediately calling to attention Lorraine's nasty glare at him.

"I beg your pardon, Ron, but from your words you seem to be implying that a woman would simply go for the richest man she meets. We're not as shallow as you think." She snapped at him, ignoring Draco's raised eyebrow as he looked at her in surprise.

Reddening slightly at having been heard and at how Jaimee had hidden an unladylike snigger behind her hand, Ron tried to redeem himself by giving Lorraine a mocking look. "Oh really? Are you telling me...That someone like you wouldn't be swept away by a dashing young heir to an incredibly wealthy and prestigious family – no matter how horrible his looks or personality is?" He pointed out loud, causing some of the debutantes behind them to shush him in irritation as they tried to listen to Miss Regina's speech.

Lorraine's eyes narrowed slowly, the famous Malfoy sneer beginning to form on her face. "Don't judge me so easily, Weasley...You barely know me. To answer your question, yes...There are some women who go for men based on wealth alone...But they are the exceptions. The rest of us want to be happy with a man we really like and care about." She told him and at that, Ron's gaze softened.

Before he could answer her, Pansy Parkinson had spoken up – directing everyone’s attention to her smug face. “He has a point, Lorraine...The man we would be happy with is one who can provide us with the luxury and lifestyle of a princess. A man who is willing to give us the world if we wanted it.” She pointed out, batting her lashes at Draco and causing him to stiffen and sneer at her in disgust but otherwise keep silent.

“The world is hardly something to give, Parkinson...I’m sure men would want to be treated with more respect than that. You talk about them like a bank account, it’s degrading.” Hermione had suddenly spoken up, earning her a fond smile from both Ron and Harry.

“Yes...Money and prestige is of course a bonus but certainly not a requirement for all women when it comes to choosing a match. Looks and intelligence are also important.” Lavender piped up in agreement, giving Hermione a wink which the head girl returned with an exasperated rolling of her eyes.

Pansy looked irritated at having been contradicted twice and looked to Marietta for support. The Ravenclaw sneered snobbishly at Hermione, raising a perfectly-plucked eyebrow at her before biting out a scathing remark.

“I can see why a muggleborn witch like you wouldn’t understand what Pansy was talking about, Granger. You see, pureblood society is all about prestige and power – whether magical, political or financial. Having grown up in such a mediocre muggle family, you’ll never relate to this.” She said with a sweet smile, this time causing Viktor Krum to speak up in defense of Hermione.

“Miss Edgecombe, I would appreciate it if you didn’t talk to my date in such a condescending manner especially since I hear you are not of noble society as well.” He pointed out, causing Marietta’s eyes to flash.

“How dare you – I am a pureblood. I—”

“Yes but what I think Viktor is trying to say is that your family is not as prestigious as how you act like it is...You have muggleborns as well

as a lot of squibs as ancestors too, don't you?" Luna had spoken up in a deadpan voice that caused Marietta's eyes to flash again in humiliation.

"Why you creepy, little freak –"

"Hey Hermione! Do you have a little annoying, inconvenient pocket—purse—thingee too? What's it for? What did you put in yours?" Jaimee had asked out loud – purposely interrupting Marietta's angry remark before it escalated into a full argument between the other girls.

Hermione blinked in utter incredulity, nodding wordlessly at her impertinent question and holding up an equally tiny blue purse from her lap. Grinning in amusement, Jaimee looked at Ron and Neville in amazement before holding up her own green purse as well.

"I find it really amusing how these damn things are small that you can hardly put anything in them. It's a bit of a hassle to bring them around really...Isn't it more practical to have pockets in the gowns? Don't you guys think so too?" She asked again, this time turning her question to Pansy and Marietta who were looking at her as though she had grown an extra head.

"Potter, you have absolutely no sense of propriety at all. It sickens me that you're even here as a debutante...Go back to being a guy!" Pansy spat out, looking Jaimee up and down like she was an insect before sneering and giving Marietta a look, which the girl met with a giggle of agreement.

Jaimee simply looked at Ron and Hermione with a clueless expression on her face and shrugged before grinning and turning happily back to slurping her soup almost as noisily as Ron had been doing.

Giving her another scathing, sickened glare, Marietta and Pansy tossed their hair over their shoulder and turned back to talk to their chuckling escorts, both of which were watching Jaimee with humor clearly written in their eyes.



Their amusement, however, was nothing compared to the helpless mirth in Draco's eyes as his shoulders shook in stifled laughter and he hid his smirking face behind his table napkin, much to Jaimee's irritation. Mistaking his fond amusement as mockery, she glared at him before turning back just in time to see Miss Regina ending her speech and bowing her head amidst the warm applause.

"So with that...I'll leave our young, lovely debutantes to enjoy the rest of evening and hopefully find themselves true happiness and contentment with a man who will appreciate them for not only their physical beauty but also the beauty of their spirit. Thank you and have a pleasant night, everyone."

As soon as she had stepped down the stage and had finally returned to her table, the band began to play another song again and everyone began returning to their meals and lively conversations. Tuning out Neville and Luna's revived conversation beside her; Jaimee turned to her newly arrived dinner and thoughtfully chewed on her roast salmon.

In thought, she let her eyes travel around the Great Hall, noticing for the first time the beautiful decorations and magical room extensions that had been added especially for that evening. Glancing briefly outside the window, her eyes widened when she saw the small archery range that had been set up near the lake as well as the small tables and refreshments scattered around the area.

A couple of feet near the place where the High Table had been, Jaimee saw an array of added rooms that included different kinds of entertainment for their guests from gambling rooms, to small, miniature bars, a music room filled different instruments and even a small sitting room with a view of the Hogwarts gardens.

So this is what Wizarding Society would be like without the constant threat of Voldemort...She mused to herself, smirking before taking another rather big bite of her salmon.

"Potter."

Recognizing Draco's voice instantly, Jaimee looked up and winced self-consciously when she met his darkly smoldering eyes and sexy smirk, her cheek still bulging with the huge bite of fish she had shoved into mouth.

The corners of Draco's lips slowly lifted and settled into a grin as he caught sight of her expression, watching as the Gryffindor swallowed loudly and wiped her mouth hastily behind the back of her hand before raising an eyebrow expectantly at him.

Holding back another chuckle, he ignored Pansy's and Marietta's pouting glares and reached over to wipe a smudge of sauce from her cheek with his thumb— causing Jaimee to blush and squirm heatedly when he brought his thumb to his own mouth and casually licked it off.

“You still owe me a dance later...Persephone.”

Blinking in surprise at how he had been the only one thus far to have recognized her costume correctly, she blushed darker and hurriedly tore her gaze from where it still rested on his tempting mouth back to her plate – oblivious to Draco's chuckle as he turned back to his dinner as well.

Blowing the blonde bangs that had fallen into her eyes in boredom, Lorraine promptly rested her chin glumly on her hand as she watched Pansy and Marietta continue to make a mockery out of Jaimee's table manners throughout dinner. Both girls were obviously growing more and more frustrated when the Gryffindor ignored them easily and settled on talking across the table to George Lancaster, Luna's escort.

They must know that Jaimee doesn't think like a girl...Their catty remarks don't have any affect on her at all. Lorraine thought to herself with a smirk, shaking her head at their ignorance and stupidity.

Bored from both girls' persistent attention on Jaimee, Malcolm Pellerin and Anthony Goldstein – had opened a pack of cards and were now playing with each other, ignoring their dates' invited Draco to play with them but the blonde had only smirked and refused, before turning to resume his more pleasurable task of staring at Jaimee before him.

Beside Lorraine, Hermione was alternating her time from hinting to Harry the correct utensil to use for each dish and responding automatically to Krum's continuous drabble about Quidditch and Bulgaria. She actually felt sorry for the poor girl as she shot her a sympathetic smile, which Hermione weakly returned.

On Lorraine's other side, Draco was gingerly wiping his face with his table napkin before raising his goblet of champagne to his lips and taking a long satisfying sip. She sighed loudly to indicate to her extremely boring cousin that she was bored with his company but he ignored her, more interested in watching the light in Jaimee's eyes light up as she laughed across them from the table.

Ron, on the other hand, was trying not to let his irritation show at Draco sneering snobbishly at him every five minutes. His dazed face indicated that he had long drowned out Lavender's mindless chattering beside him and was shifting his gaze back and forth between staring at Lorraine to sneering back at her cousin beside her.

In effect, this made Lorraine extremely uncomfortable and she focused all her attention on picking at her dinner instead, looking up every now and then to watch the sea of dancers before turning back to shovel food miserably into her mouth.

In fact, out of all the couples at their table, only Luna Lovegood and Neville Longbottom seemed to be the only ones enjoying each other's company as they regaled one another in lively conversation, annoying the other occupants in the table with their occasional laughter and giddiness.

Looking up, she managed to meet Ron's blue eyes for a split second and he smiled at her, causing her to blush and smile back. Unfortunately for them, Draco saw this little exchange and he shoved a spoon of green jell-o into Lorraine's mouth, causing her to choke in shock.

"Crackpot Dumbledore was right. Try the jell-o, it's good." He told her sarcastically as she coughed and pulled the spoon out of her mouth, hurling it at him in righteous anger.

“Draco, don’t you have somewhere you have to be?” She asked impatiently, causing him to raise an eyebrow at her question.

“Where?”

“Oh, I don’t know...the Moon?! Anywhere that isn’t here!” She snapped irritably at him, causing him to smirk and reward her with a charming, obnoxious smile before turning back to staring at Jaimee once more.

“You know this is the downside of bringing a relative to a ball.” She said loudly next to him, drawing his attention to her once more. “I’m sorry, you said something?” He asked, looking at her and feigning confusion.

She gave a loud, exasperated shriek at him before she shot up from her seat, hurled her table napkin at her cousin and stalked off toward the dessert table to busy herself with some chocolate. When she returned – munching angrily on a large piece of chocolate cake – Draco took one look at her before smirking widely again and turning back to sneer at Ron.

“That will make you fat you know. Fat-ter.”

“GARGH!”

Lorraine screamed in exasperation again at her infuriatingly insufferable smirking cousin, her face growing red with anger as she promptly took a huge piece of cake and shoved it angrily into his face – causing him to redden in humiliation and the other occupants of the table – particularly Jaimee to burst out laughing.

Before Draco could utter anything, both irate Malfoys looked up to see a chuckling Philippe Winchester walking up behind them, looking with an amused smirk at Draco’s chocolate-smudged face as he held his hand out to Lorraine.

“Malfoy... I believe brown isn’t really your color.” He told him calmly, causing Draco to redden further as he began wiping his face before

glaring heatedly at his cousin. Lorraine simply stuck her tongue at him in a very un-Malfoyish way with a sneer.

“Lorraine...Would you mind coming with me for a bit? I’d like to introduce you to my family for a moment...They’ve been bugging me all night to see you.” Philippe started, immediately causing Ron to glance up and watch them with a narrowing of his eyes.

Lorraine looked slightly uncertain at this, her eyes darting from Ron, to Draco to Philippe once more. “Uhm...Well, Philippe... I—”

“Go on, Philippe. Take the little brat. It’ll get her off my back at least, she was starting to annoy me.” Draco snapped, still wiping his face. This immediately caused Lorraine to level him with an evil glare.

“I was irritating you?!”

The Malfoy heir merely smirked and waved them away and before she could insult him again, Philippe whisked her away and dragged her through the maze of tables and people around the hall. He stopped briefly when he caught of a few pureblood friends drinking near a table of wine and gaily waving him over. Grinning and waving eagerly back, he turned to her and gave her an apologetic smile.

“Will you excuse me for just a moment...? I’d just like to have a few words with some friends of mine over there. I’ll be back in five minutes...I promise.” He told her, failing to notice the relief in her features when she forced a smile nodded.

At that, he turned and headed for his friends, grinning particularly at a beautiful blonde who was waving at him in all too familiar manner that Lorraine failed to notice. Instead, the female Malfoy stood off to the side of the dance floor and watched the dancing couples idly, waiting for him to return.

Her impatience began to grow, however, when after about fifteen minutes he still hadn’t returned and turning to look at him again, her eyes narrowed fiercely when she saw that he was laughing rather loudly with his friends, his arm wrapped a around a blonde girl that Lorraine didn’t even know.

That insolent, despicable pig...I think he forgot I was even here! She thought indignantly to herself, feeling outraged and she was just about to walk back angrily to her table when a hand grabbed her gently from behind, causing her to turn around in surprise.

Upon seeing Ron's warm smile at her, she blinked and looked down to see another plate with a large piece of chocolate cake being offered to her from his outstretched hand. Hearing her soft chuckle, he inclined his head towards Philippe briefly.

"You mind if I save you from another unwanted jerk that doesn't deserve your attention?" He asked jokingly, instantly causing Lorraine to stiffen at the way he had unknowingly called her practically future fiancé an unwanted jerk.

Pointedly deciding that she didn't need to tell him anything since nothing was officially decided yet – at least not to her – she smiled at him and nodded her agreement before gratefully taking the plate of chocolate cake from his offered hands with sparkling blue eyes.

"Sure...But only if you promise to dance with me." She easily responded, giggling slightly at the wide, goofy grin he gave her in return. Laughing to himself, he pointed to the cake in her hands, shaking his head in amusement.

"Of course...But I think you should finish that first. I don't think I'd appreciate having chocolate all over my face by the end of our dance." He kidded, causing her to laugh again as she nodded and began eating away at the cake with pure bliss written in her eyes.

He watched her for a long moment, looking highly amused at the childishly happy expression on her face as she ate the chocolate very slowly, savoring the taste of each bite in her mouth. When she caught him staring at her, she reddened in embarrassment and set her fork down in shame. When he didn't say anything, she reddened further and gave him a sheepish smile before speaking up.

"I'm sorry...It's just that...I'm a frustrated chocoholic, you see...I love chocolate with a passion...And well, I rarely get to eat it that much

since my family keeps warning me that I'll get too fat. After all, it's rather disgraceful to be overweight in a family like mine." She admitted in embarrassment, causing a flash of resentment in Ron's eyes.

"That's stupid."

Looking up at him in surprise and slight insult, she gasped when he purposefully dragged her over to the dessert table once more and began piling as much chocolate pastries and sweets onto her plate as he could, causing Lorraine to blush in embarrassment when she saw the debutantes beside them giving her a horrified look of disbelief.

"Ron, stop it! That's enough! I will not eat all that!" She hissed at him under her breath but he gave her a reckless grin before popping a chocolate éclair into his mouth in satisfaction.

"You can and you will! Who cares what your family thinks of you? You should eat what you want. You're an incredibly beautiful, slim girl – you have nothing to worry about. Here! Eat this." He told her, picking up the large brownie on the plate and offering it to her.

She shook her head furiously, looking horrified. "I will not! Ron! I've already eaten a huge slice of chocolate cake; I have surpassed my chocolate limit for the day, thank you very much! I—" She stopped midsentence when Ron shoved the chocolate into her open mouth, causing her to choke slightly in surprise.

Her anger gave soon gave way to delight however as she tasted the savory goodness of the brownie and she hummed in pleasure, lifting the brownie in her hand and taking another large, satisfying bite.

"Mmm... That's so good..." She groaned, her eyes bouncing happily as she ate and Ron laughed affectionately as he watched her, admiring the way her eyes looked so adorably childlike and contented at the simple pastry.

"See...? It's not as bad as you think it is... You don't have to fit into the ridiculously high, perfect standards of weight in your ridiculous family. Just... have fun! Enjoy yourself!" He told her pointedly,

laughing again when she had finished the brownie in her mouth and snatched the minty, chocolate cupcake he had in his own hand.

“I’ll kill you after tonight, Weasley... You’re going to make me gain so much weight. Daddy and Anton would absolutely freak if they saw me right now...” She moaned out loud, munching contentedly on the cupcake in her hand as Ron rolled his eyes at her words.

“Forget them. Let them cut off the sinful goodness of chocolate if they want to...That doesn’t have to include you. You should do whatever you want...It’s your life.” He told her, chuckling again and reaching over to wipe a smudge of chocolate icing off her cheek with a tissue.

Then, a mischievous twinkle in his eye, he turned to her and grinned widely, causing Lorraine’s eyebrows to rise up in suspicion. “You want to meet some people who know how to have real fun?” He asked her slowly, causing her to turn around and meet his mischievous smile with a slow, curious nod.

Seeing her smile, Ron winked at her before taking her by the hand and dragging her over to where his family was seated – instantly initiating a round of loud greetings and catcalls at his arrival. His brothers looked up when they saw him, eyeing a blushing Lorraine with a smirk.

“Ronnie-boy! We were wondering when you’d come over to see us! Who’s this gorgeous young lady over here and why is she with you?” Fred Weasley exclaimed loudly from where he sat, jumping up from his seat and running over to clap Ron loudly on the back, causing the younger boy to wince in pain and punch his brother back on the shoulder.

Seeing his entire family’s teasing gaze on him, Ron suddenly blushed and indicated to Lorraine with a small smile on his face. “Everyone...This is a friend of mine... Lorraine Malfoy. Lorraine, meet my family.” He told her, naming the people seated at the table one by one. He winced in embarrassment at the teasing smile his mother and father gave him and the smirk he received from Bill, Fleur and Charlie as they observed his blush.



Percy, as well as his wife Penelope, looked at Lorraine with a genuinely curious smile while Ginny simply rolled her eyes at the possible arrival of another half-veela in the family, turning away from the blonde girl in annoyance.

At hearing the name 'Malfoy' however, Fred and George had shot each other identically evil, devious smiles that Ron knew too well and immediately made him feel sorry for the blonde girl he had introduced to them.

"A Malfoy, huh? It's a pleasure to meet you then, Lorraine. I'm Fred Weasley by the way and that handsome little devil seated there is my twin brother, George." Fred introduced loudly, walking forward and offering his hand to the blushing blonde girl.

When she had slipped her gloved hand into his, however, she immediately shrieked loudly in horror when a huge burst of fire had erupted from his hand and dissipated loudly into the air in a cloud of smoke – causing her to stumble backwards into Ron's steady arms amidst George's hearty, amused laughter.

"Fred! That is no way to treat Ron's lovely friend over here, you scared the poor girl half to death!" Mrs. Weasley instantly admonished, looking at her son with an angry glare but Mr. Weasley looked amused and laughed as well, shaking his head.

"Don't mind Fred over there, Lorraine...That's just his way of saying hello." He told her lightly, causing Lorraine to redden further when saw the smiling, amused faces of everyone else around the table – a very handsome man named Bill, a stunningly beautiful blonde woman named Fleur whom she presumed to be his wife, a well-built man named Charlie, another couple – Percy and Penelope – and Ginny – whom she already knew from Hogwarts.

Feeling her cheeks still aflame with embarrassment, she mumbled something under her breath in response as Ron steadied her back on her feet with an apologetic smile. Before he could say something, George had stood up – his wine glass in his hand as he walked over to Lorraine with a genuinely shameful look on his face.

"I'm sorry for my brother's horrible behavior here, Lorraine... Why don't I make up for it? We're actually producers of a line of wizarding candy you see – here. Have one." He offered warmly, raising a small basket of differently colored, wrapped candies in front of her eyes.

"Th—Thank you, G—George...Was it?" She managed to say uncertainly, reaching into the basket and muttering an apology when her hand bumped slightly against his glass of wine. She shrugged and gave Ron a small smile before she unwrapped a green candy slowly in slight uncertainty.

Ron, however, looked murderous and he was about to yank the candy away from her hand when it was too late and she popped it into her mouth, immediately causing George's face to break out into a wide grin of anticipation.

Again, both Fred and George burst out into another round of laughter as Lorraine's white porcelain skin began to glow a bright neon green with pink spots. Hearing their laughter, she blinked up at them in confusion and dread. Beside her, even Ron was hiding a smile behind his hand and the others on the table looked like they were doing the same thing, save for Ron's mother.

"George Weasley, you set that poor girl's beautiful skin back this instant or I will personally shed your skin from your body!" Mrs. Weasley snapped angrily at her son, instantly causing Lorraine's eyes to widen in fear as she hurriedly yanked her mirror out of her purse and looked at her face in a state of panic.

"N—Now, Lorraine...Please don't freak out. My brothers can easily remove the jinx in a second. There's no need for hysterics." Ron said soothingly, watching as a series of unreadable emotions surged through Lorraine's blue eyes.

Oh great...Crap. She's going to freak... Is she about to cry?! I better do something! Ron thought to himself in panic, wincing when he saw Lorraine's eyes widen to great proportions as she continued to inspect her face in the mirror.

“But she’s a Malfoy, Mom! Her blood alone justifies us pulling horrible pranks on her simply because she’s a snotty, pompous little brat who has her wand stuck up her ars—”

“George, unless you want me to hit you, you will not finish that sentence. Now hurry up and change her back!” Ron growled, grabbing his brother by the front of his tux but before George could answer him, both Weasleys froze and turned around in surprise when they heard Lorraine’s loud shriek of laughter behind them.

“Huh?!”

Fred, George and Ron both gaped in disbelief at the sight of Lorraine giggling madly as she stared at her reflection, poking repeatedly at her own skin and making faces at herself in the mirror in absolute hilarity.

“Bloody hell...Is she...laughing?!” Fred asked out loud in amazement and in spite of himself, a grin spread out onto his face. Both twins watched Lorraine trying to control her laughter as Ron walked back over to her with an uncertain smile on his face.

“Lorraine? Are you okay...? You’re...not mad? Or crying?” He asked, raising a curious eyebrow as Lorraine finally turned to face him, causing him to involuntarily snort in laughter again as he caught sight of her face.

Lorraine simply stuck her tongue out at him before giving Fred and George a genuine smile again, pointing to their little basket of candies in amusement. “That’s an interesting little business you got there... What does the blue powdery candy thing do...?” She asked, looking at the twins in genuine interest.

George grinned and gave her a proud look before answering. “That, my dear, will make its eater spurt out colored bubbles from his mouth and nose for as long as two hours before it wears off. I invented that one personally you see, it—” He stopped and promptly choked in shock, his voice fading when a large, bright blue bubble erupted from his mouth, flying up into the air and popping just below the chandelier above their table.

Looking back down to see Lorraine's triumphant smirk at him, George's eyes widened when Lorraine held up the empty blue wrapper of the candy she had just inquired about before indicating to the wine glass in his hand.

"I see...I was curious...I slipped it into your drink before you made me eat the green one. I figured you guys would try something like this." She drawled easily, causing Ron, Fred, as well as the entire table of Weasleys, to erupt into loud cheers and howls of laughter once more.

In spite of himself, George gave her a huge, friendly grin. "Touché, Miss Malfoy..." He surrendered, smiling sheepishly when another orange bubble escaped his nose, causing his brothers and his parents to erupt into loud chuckles again.

When Fred had stepped forward and removed the green from Lorraine's face, Fleur suddenly spoke up, drawing the female Malfoy's attention to her exquisite beauty. "Do you 'ave veela blood, Lorraine...?" She inquired in a thick French accent above the boys' laughter.

Lorraine smiled and nodded. "My mother is a veela, actually...My brother and I are both half-veela. Are...you a veela, Miss Fleur?" She asked curiously, looking at the woman's stunning features. Fleur smiled warmly and nodded, lacing her fingers with her husband's before she responded.

"Yes...Part-veela to be precise...My grandmuzzer was one. I come from France, actually...From ze pureblood family of Delacours." She told her and at hearing this, Lorraine's eyes widened in surprise.

"I met her three years ago here in Hogwarts...Boy was she a sight for sore eyes. She was all prissy, stuck-up and a bit of a prude back then..." Bill piped in a teasing voice, causing Fleur to whack him playfully on the head.

"I've met your family once before...You're very popular in France...We live there too, you see. It's a pleasure to meet you. So

how did you and Bill finally get together?" Lorraine inquired curiously, giving the couple an expectant look.

It was Bill who answered as he gave Ron a teasing wink before turning to Lorraine with an affectionate smile. "It was simple, really...I showed her that there was so much more fulfillment in laughter and silliness than in their family's uptight traditions. And well...She found that freedom in my kooky family and she fell in love with me from then on and everyday thereafter." He said proudly, causing Fleur to blush again as she gave him a weak glare.

"Well, you don't 'ave to be so arrogant about it, love." She told him, causing Lorraine to smile in awe at them when the couple shared a brief kiss before turning back to smile at her. They smiled wider when they noted the look of deep thought and indecision in the young blonde's eyes.

"Well...It was certainly a pleasure meeting you, Miss Malfoy...We hope we see you again. Soon." Mr. Weasley had spoken up; interrupting her deep thoughts and smiling pointedly at Lorraine. The female Malfoy blushed and nodded her agreement.

"Excuse me, everyone...I'm going to ask Lorraine for a dance." Ron suddenly announced, taking her by the arm. Before they left, Lorraine rewarded the entire table with a genuinely friendly smile which everyone – including Fred and George – returned with a warm one of their own.

"Would you like something to drink?" Ron asked a laughing Lorraine a little later on that night as they broke apart briefly from their third consecutive dance, chuckling lightly at one another when they recalled their theatrics on the dance floor.

"I have never seen anybody dance so horribly stiff in my life...Do you have two left feet, Ron?" She teased and at his threatening glare, she broke out into a fit of giggles again, shaking her head at his ire.

In spite of himself, he smiled at her and he bonked her playfully on the head to get her attention. When she looked back at him, he gave her another grin, gesturing his head slightly towards the drink table.

"I'm going to go get us some drinks first to rest...What would you like?" He repeated to her, waiting patiently as Lorraine thought for a moment before grinning widely at him and batting her eyelashes. "Chocolate milk, please." She answered, giggling when Ron rolled his eyes.

"I've created a monster..." He mumbled loudly as he walked off, still hearing Lorraine's melodious laughter behind him before she walked off and waited for him by his family's table again.

Turning around briefly to watch her, he smiled when he saw her plopping herself right in between Fred and George and digging curiously through their basket of candies again – laughing in an unladylike manner as another bubble spurt out of George's nose.

He watched as Charlie seemed to chime something at her and Lorraine threw her head back laughed at his quip, giggling harder when Fred suddenly picked her up and began spinning her around the table in a horrible imitation of tango.

Shaking his head and grinning madly like a Cheshire cat, he finally managed to make his way over to the drink and table and began pouring himself a glass of champagne which he downed instantly in thirst. Then, rolling his eyes, he walked over to the kid's section of the table and began pouring chocolate milk into a large glass, topping the drink off with a spray of whipped cream and a cherry on top.

Whistling to himself, he was just about to walk back towards his family when a bachelor had walked up right beside him and began pouring himself a glass of champagne as well. When he accidentally bumped into him, the dark-haired boy looked up in surprise but otherwise gave him a small grin which Ron returned with a nod.

Just as Ron had decided to pour himself another glass of champagne before heading off, he found himself looking back up to watch Lorraine once more, seeing her involved in a rather serious discussion Fleur as both women chatted amongst themselves in hushed whispers.

Seeing Ron's staring at Lorraine, the dark-haired bachelor nudged him lightly – causing him to turn around and meet the other boy's superior smirk in confusion.

"She's pretty fine, huh...?"

Blinking rapidly up at him, Ron felt his ears redden slightly in anger as he met the dark-haired boy's knowing sneer with another look of utter confusion.

"Excuse me...?"

The dark-haired boy simply chuckled, leaning slightly against the table and gesturing towards Lorraine's direction with his glass of champagne. "Mistress Malfoy over there...She's quite the treat." He commented, oblivious to how Ron's hands had tightened into fists as he heard his words.

"Just who do you think—"

Instantly, the boy stuck his hand out at him with a formal smile. "Philippe Winchester...Heir to Peter Winchester and successor to Winchester investments." He introduced himself, smirking wider when Ron had grasped his hand in speechless stupor.

"R—Ron. Ron Weasley."

"Weasley, huh? For your information, Weasley...That scrumptious little morsel over there is my soon-to-be fiancé, Miss Lorraine Malfoy." He told him smugly, taking another loud sip of champagne, oblivious to the look of anger that had crossed Ron's eyes.

"Fiance?"

Philippe nodded, smirking to himself in self-satisfaction. "Her father is a good friend of mine you see...Plus, her family and mine have been good business partners for decades. Malfoys and Winchesters... It's the perfect match...Looking at her, I'd say I got pretty lucky though didn't I, mate? Merging the Malfoy and Winchester bloodline wouldn't

be so difficult for me given a wife like her, if you know what I mean..." He kidded with a suggestive wink, nudging Ron on the shoulder again.

Ron felt sickened at the other boy's words as he forced a harsh, bitter laugh to escape his lips. All of a sudden, his gaze on Lorraine turned spiteful. "Yeah...Lucky...Did she accept your proposal already?" He asked, looking at Philippe in question.

The pureblooded heir merely snorted, downing his drink in a single gulp before setting it back on the table. "What kind of question is that? Of course she did! I'm the heir to one of the richest, pureblooded families around. The kind of life I can give her compares to nothing these other petty bachelors can... Her father is drawing up our engagement papers as we speak." He told him pointedly, grabbing another glass of champagne from the table.

Ron was feeling nauseated now and the fingers he had around Lorraine's drink had tightened furiously, trembling with anger and humiliation. When Philippe had finished pouring himself another drink, he turned and gave Ron another acknowledging smirk and patted the redhead on the shoulder.

"Well...Nice meeting you, W—Wesley? Haha...See you around." He drawled, raising his glass briefly up at him before walking back to his group of friends nearby. Ron didn't know how long he must have been standing there and staring into nothing when Lorraine finally walked over to him with a bright smile – taking the drink in his hand and smiling when she saw the whipped cream on top.

"You're really spoiling me, Ron. I could really get used to this, you know..." She told him playfully but Ron simply looked up and met her teasing grin with a cold, callous sneer. "Oh, I'll bet you'd like that wouldn't you? Being spoiled rotten?" He spat out, instantly causing the smile on Lorraine's face to disappear into a look of concern.

"Ron...? Are you alright?" She asked uncertainly, setting her drink down and inspecting his irate features. When the Gryffindor didn't respond, she forced another smile at him, indicating to Fleur across the room.



“Fleur was just telling me how she and Bill used to date...They’re really such a sweet, romantic couple aren’t they? I wish I could find that happiness in my own marriage.” She gushed softly, smiling to herself at the thought.

Hearing her words, Ron turned to give her a mocking smile, looking her up and down as though she was the most disgusting thing he had ever seen in his life. “Really...?? Only yours would be one filled with money and jewelry and anything related to money. That’s all that’s ever been important to you stuck-up snobs, anyway. You care about nothing but yourselves. Disgusting, the lot of you.” He snapped again and this time, Lorraine’s eyes finally flashed in anger.

Glaring up at him in indignation, she raised a hand and slapped him hard across the cheek – causing him to look up and return her glare with flashing, cold blue eyes. “What the hell, Malfoy?!” He snarled and she sneered back, shaking her head.

“What the bloody hell is your problem, Weasley?!”

“I just met your bloody perfect, snotty rich fiancé, that’s what! The one you didn’t tell me about!” He blurted out, shoving her away from him and slamming his empty glass onto the table. Wincing at his words, she shoved at him again – her eyes blurring slightly in frustration.

“Philippe is not my fiancé, Ron!”

“Not yet! But he will be....Merlin, to think I almost believed you awhile ago with all your talk about wanting to be with a man you cared about! About not falling all over yourself for the richest bloke who offers you a bloody ring! Ugh, I don’t need any of this!” He raged, shaking his head and turning around to leave.

“Ron! If you would just listen to me! You’re not being fair, you have your own prejudices against me too!” Lorraine screamed after him but he was no longer listening and was stalking off towards his Gryffindor friends across the hall in heated silence. He saw neither the look of absolute regret nor the confused, frustrated tears falling from Lorraine’s eyes as he never once turned around, leaving her alone and staring helplessly after him.

## Bachelor No. 5

With a disgruntled expression on her face, Jaimee looked up and grimaced at the pale face of the pureblooded sleaze in front of her – for the life of her, she couldn't even remember his name. While they danced, he alternated his time from staring down her breasts to trying to lower his hand down her back low enough to touch her arse.

“So...I hear you're pretty domineering...Does that extend to the bedroom?”

Meeting his perverted expression for a moment with a mixture of disgust, outrage and disbelief, Jaimee managed to give him a very tight, innocent smile before she took his hand and began leading the dance herself.

“Wow...You like taking charge. I like that. Hmm...You have a pretty strong grip for a girl—Ow..Hehe..OW! No seriously babe, my hand is beginning to hurt a bit – BLOODY HELL! OW! It's not sexy anymore, stop it – MOTHER OF MERLIN!”

Covering his mouth with her hand, Jaimee threw the concerned dancers around them a sweet, reassuring feminine smile, feeling a bubbling of sadistic pleasure welling up inside her chest when she heard and felt the a satisfying crunching of bones in her fist.

## Bachelor No. 9

“Are you wearing panties?”

Freezing at the unexpected question, Jaimee looked up with narrowed eyes to see the brown-haired, rather skinny pureblooded heir looking thoughtfully up and down her figure almost as though he was trying to decide the answer to his own question.

“Excuse me?”

Looking up to meet her angry glare, he smiled at her and gestured to her skirt. “Well, I was just admiring your gorgeous body – you're really

hot. But of course you must know that, you were a guy once, right? So how is it...? Do you touch yourself?" He asked again, this time causing Jaimee to flush in absolute embarrassment as she stopped dancing and disentangled herself from him.

"WHAT?! You sick freak, what kind of stupid questions—"

"Don't be mad, it's an honest question." He told her, sniggering at the look of indignation on her face. Looking thoughtfully at him for a long moment, she allowed herself to sneer before yanking him into her arms and pulling them into a dancing position again.

Noting the appreciative grin that had spread onto his leering face, Jaimee leaned forward to whisper something seductively into his ear. "I'm wearing lacy panties, actually." She told him, causing the leer on his face to widen.

"Really—"

He never got to finish his question as he let out a squeak when he felt something pressed against his crotch. Looking down, he caught sight of Jaimee's threatening sneer at him just before he saw the very wand that had vanquished the dark lord shoved threateningly against his manhood.

Matching his trembling look of fear with a beautiful smile, she batted her eyelashes at him before answering. "No...Not really. I actually prefer boxers...Much more comfortable. It's warmer too...Especially on...freezing cold nights like this...Don't you think so?" She drawled, sneering wider before she wordlessly initiated a strong freezing spell from her wand, causing him to yelp out loud and start jumping up and down the dance floor in a state of pain and panic while clutching his crotch.

"Argh!! Cold, Cold! My crotch is freezing! Somebody make it stop!"

I wonder if they have any more chocolate cake. Jaimee wondered idly, walking towards the dessert table with a thoughtful look on her face.

“You’re very pretty, Miss Jaimee...It is an honor for you to have accepted to dance with me.”

Sighing helplessly, she looked up into the rather sincere smile of the meek, friendly looking bachelor who spun her gently before catching her in his arms. Returning his compliment with an uncertain smile, she looked helplessly over at her godfather for help with this one but the Marauder was too busy smiling and talking with Miss Regina by their table – much like he had been doing the entire night.

Biting her lip in frustration, she eventually tuned her partner out as he continued to shower her with compliments and talk about how much his family was a stickler for propriety, pausing every now and then to ask her if she was alright or if he was coming on too strong for her.

She racked her brain for a way out of this, searching around the hall for anything to trigger an idea. Her eyes widened when she caught sight of several Slytherins near the end of the Great Hall, most of which were making out publicly while at the same time trying to keep within the shadows of the corners for fear of being reprimanded by their teachers.

An idea popped into her head. She interrupted another compliment about to be issued from his mouth by looking up at him and giving him a suggestive smile, biting her lip and letting her eyes trail teasingly up and down his body.

“Okay...Now that we’ve established how attracted you are to me...Would you like to join those couples over there in the corner...? I’m sure...it’ll be a great way to...” She stopped and leaned forward, caressing his earlobes with her lips before continuing in a low, seductive whisper. “Get to know each other better...” She murmured, watching as he blushed a dark red and hastily tried to pull away from her ministrations.

“U—Uhm...We-Well you do come on a bit strong, don’t you, Miss Jaimee?” He attempted to joke in an effort to divert her attention but Jaimee simply raised an eyebrow, staring at him through a half-lidded gaze.

“Does that...turn you on...?” She drawled, smirking sexily as the boy missed a dance step and stumbled onto his own feet, his ears turning red with embarrassment.

“Well...I uh... I don’t think that would really be such a good idea, I come from a very conservative family you see and I...” His voice trailed off when Jaimee grabbed his hand and positioned it daringly high up her thigh, causing the poor bachelor to meep in alarm.

“Oh, come on, Sissy...You know you want to. To tell you the truth, I’ve been feeling rather heated myself... If you know what I mean.” She let her voice trail off and she lifted her eyebrows up and down suggestively at him again, inwardly laughing at his pale, horrified face.

She yanked him closer against her, lifting her leg up against him so that he could support the very smooth skin of her thigh. Watching the beads of sweat forming on his face and the panicky motion of his eyes as he sought for an exit from being molested by the boy-turned-girl debutante, he laughed nervously and shoved her slowly away from him.

“M—Miss Jaimee, I believe I was mistaken... It appears as though we are not suitable for each other after all. I must apologize, I—”

“Aw, come on! Come with me and I’ll give you a night to remember and you’ll realize exactly how suitable we are for each other.” Jaimee drawled, licking her lips and making to pull him toward her again but the boy had already meeped and was hastily making for the exit, glancing every now and then behind him to make sure a lustful debutante wasn’t trailing after him.

Bachelor No. 14

“—and then, when I graduate from Hogwarts, I hope to work in the Ministry as an Auror. I intend to hunt down all the remaining dark wizards in hiding and bring them to justice.” Jaimee finished, pausing when Nicholas Fudge had spun her around as they danced much later that night in the smaller crowd of other couples gathered on the dance floor.

“You have very beautiful eyes.”

Jaimee cringed and tried not to groan out loud as she met Nicholas' open staring at her face – an obvious indication that the boy had not heard a single word she had said and had been staring at her in stupor the entire time.

“Thank you, Nicholas...But please try to listen to what I'm saying.” She forced out patiently but she tensed in growing anger when she caught him staring down her breasts again, causing another irritated but otherwise helpless growl to erupt from her throat.

Quite frankly, she was exhausted from dancing with nearly fifteen bachelors at this point and she was more than ready to sit down onto a nearby table and rest her aching feet but every time she did, some hapless bastard would come and approach her for another dance – something Sirius had specifically warned her not to decline during a debutante ball.

Sighing, she amused herself instead by looking around the room in search of her friends – all of which she knew had scattered into different social groups and areas as soon as dinner was over. Ron and Hermione were, she noticed, nowhere in sight while Neville and Luna had been on the dance floor for practically an hour – much to her growing annoyance.

Both Draco and Lorraine had left immediately after dinner – Lorraine dragged off by Philippe and Draco joining his family outside by the lake and though Jaimee had avoided his gaze the entire time since he had called her Persephone, she felt a slight twinge of disappointment when he had left her so suddenly after that.

The band was playing a slightly more upbeat tune now and they were dancing a livelier modification of swing while the other debutantes had spread themselves out to mingle more with the other guests – some of which had gone outside to linger by the lake or archery while the others had gone into the bar or sitting rooms.

Pansy and Marietta – as well as several other debutantes – were now in the middle of a large group of debutantes and bachelors hanging out near the Great Hall entrance. The group was, Jaimee noticed, slowly getting themselves drunk with wine and the debutantes around them were all either flirtatiously clinging onto the arm of a nearby bachelor or giggling amongst themselves.

Most of the other, more dignified pureblooded bachelors – as well as family heads – had decided to gather in the gambling room for a game of high-stakes poker while the other families and matrons were currently mingling amongst themselves in the Great Hall and watching the dancers and the remaining debutantes.

Jaimee saw Fred and George flirting with several Ravenclaw debutantes by a table as well as Bill and Fleur dancing nearby, the newly married couple looking like a perfect example of marital bliss as they exchanged kisses and affectionate glances every now and then.

Sirius had excused himself from her about an hour ago after Jaimee's failed seduction ploy and was now escorting a lovely Miss Regina around the grounds, causing the dark-haired debutante to glare spitefully at him as he had left her to fend for herself just when another line of bachelors had walked up to her for her, asking for a dance.

Most of the Hogwarts teachers were sitting in a table among themselves, chatting to some Ministry officials and debutante parents while at the same time trying to keep a close watch over the proceedings of the party. Dumbledore was among them and seeing Jaimee glance at him, he looked up from his lively conversation with Mafalda Hopkirk and gave her a bright smile, which she returned albeit hesitantly with a small one of her own.

"You have very sensual lips..."

Gritting her teeth in frustration, she held back the nasty string of curses that were threatening to erupt from her mouth and instead gave him a forced grimace-like smile. Unfortunately, the boy seemed

oblivious to her growing anger and stared dreamily at her with wide eyes.

“Wow...You smell incredible, Aphrodite.”

Jaimee’s left eye twitched dramatically.

Within seconds, she would have had Nicholas’ throat wrapped tightly within her itching fingers when she heard a familiar voice approaching them – causing them both to look to their right to see a very handsome Anton Malfoy smiling at them with an amused expression on his face.

“May I cut in, Nicholas?” He asked, raising an eyebrow and winking at Jaimee when he saw the obvious look of relief on her features and the obvious irritated one on Nicholas’.

When the other boy looked as though he was about to hesitate and refuse, Anton deliberately offered a hand to Jaimee anyway, which the girl immediately took. Disentangling herself from Nicholas’ arms, she let Anton pull her towards him – much to the other boy’s indignation.

“Malfoy, this is a breach of gentleman rules of respect. You are not supposed to interrupt a fellow suitor when he is with a lady.” Nicholas had hissed, clenching into tight fists when he met Anton’s equally mocking, menacing sneer.

Jaimee nervously bit her lip and was about to speak up before a fight broke out when Anton stepped in front of her, using a hand to lightly push her backwards behind him before he looked right up and met the other boy’s angry eyes with a calm, scheming smirk.

In surprise, Jaimee watched the anger in Nicholas’ eyes swirl repeatedly for several seconds – a disoriented, almost hypnotic look on his face – before the colors in his eyes decidedly settled themselves into a calm, eagerly friendly brown.

Blinking in confusion, Jaimee stared as the other boy gave Anton a friendly grin which the latter returned with a nod. “Sure, Malfoy...You



can take her now. I figured she was getting bored with me already, anyway...You two enjoy yourselves.” He immediately rushed out, smiling widely again and bowing to Jaimee’s bewildered expression before he excused himself and went to claim another debutante for another dance.

Turning to Anton’s smirk, Jaimee raised a single eyebrow in both amusement and suspicion. “Impressive...I didn’t know the veela charm could work on men as well...” She mused, causing Anton to stiffen slightly before he forced a laugh and gave her a look of surprise.

“Well...You do know your stuff, Miss Potter...” He observed with a hint of irritation that went unnoticed in his voice, still chuckling to himself when he began leading Jaimee into an easy, elegant dance towards the middle of the dance floor.

She narrowed her eyes at him, suddenly feeling horribly vulnerable around him when she realized that she had unfortunately forgotten to wear her veela repellant charm that evening. “How does it work...Exactly?” She asked suspiciously, raising a single eyebrow as he twirled her around before catching her in his arms.

He chose not to answer her question but instead, casually guided them around the dance floor – pausing every now and then to nod in greeting to several other pureblooded couples they passed by. Seeing her gaze still focused expectantly at him, he diverted her attention with another question instead, successfully taking her mind off her suspicion.

“Have you any idea how long a line I had to wait just to steal a dance from you, Jaimee...? I’m like...what? Your fourteenth – fifteenth dance this evening?” He teased, causing her to blink and laugh in embarrassment.

“Fifteenth, actually...” She admitted, smiling when she saw the incredulous expression on his face. “So how were the other bachelors, then? I was watching you with some of them...It seems to me you’re purposely scaring them off. Some of them are friends of mine you

know... Philippe Winchester...Theodore Nott...Chancelor Winston..." He noted, grinning when she looked sheepish and made a face.

"Yeah, well I was only acting on self-defense. Most of them would talk of nothing but themselves and those that didn't spent the entire time staring at my breasts or trying to grab my arse." She told him, causing him to laugh in amusement but cringe at her use of words.

"By the way...You pureblooded men all act the same. Arrogant, pompous and ignorant I might add...Do you know that Nicholas was the tenth guy tonight to mistake me for Aphrodite?" She added, rolling her eyes in irritation.

At his slightly sheepish expression, Jaimee groaned and burst out laughing as she realized what it meant. "Oh Merlin...Don't tell me you thought I was Aphrodite too? Come on, Malfoy...I had higher expectations from you than that." She teased, causing him to shrug and give her a rueful grin.

Shaking his head, he gestured to her gown as he answered. "Well...It isn't hard to conclude. Someone as beautiful as you, we can only assume you to be the goddess of love and beauty. Besides, more than half of the debutantes in this ball here tonight are probably dressed as Aphrodite so it's the safest guess to make." Anton reasoned, causing her to roll her eyes.

"So...Uhm...Athena?" He guessed again and Jaimee gave him a disgruntled sneer which he returned with a helpless grin.

"Hera?"

"You certainly have more self-confidence than most, Malfoy." She told him pointedly with a hint of annoyance in her voice, causing him to chuckle and pull her slightly closer.

"I'd prefer to think of it as perseverance." He easily countered and at his knowing smile, she couldn't help but laugh helplessly at his quick wit.

“Persephone.” He finally guessed, his eyes moving to inspect her crown and her half-mask in realization before giving her another sheepish smile.

Jaimee simply inclined her head, chuckling when he paused to twirl her around again. “Four guesses? Well I suppose you did better than the other dimwits I had to dance with.” She mused, smirking when he raised his eyebrow at her in curiosity.

“Dimwits, huh?”

She chuckled to herself, nodding to his query. “I’ve only realized now how men are so easily manipulated by women if you know which buttons to push. It’s kind of sad really...To think I used to be exactly the same.” She mused out loud, shaking her head.

Instead of answering, Anton chuckled and raised a hand to brush away a stray lock that had fallen into her eyes, drawing her attention to his smoldering blue eyes. “Not just men, Jaimee...People. People are easily manipulated...if you know which buttons to push...Even women.” He told her, smirking when he saw another flash of suspicion in her eyes.

“You didn’t answer my question, Anton...How does it work?” She finally remembered to ask, blinking rapidly and struggling wildly with her senses as they slowly became intoxicated with an overwhelming need to feel her body closer to his.

He gave her a lazy grin; his eyes gleaming when Jaimee felt an intense shudder of desire for him suddenly flood her senses, forcing her to press herself tighter against his lean body. Bending down to caress the strands of hair from her pale cheek, Anton leaned forward and pressed a brief, sensual kiss on her lips, causing her to give a sharp intake of breath.

“How does...what work...? The veela charm...?” He drawled softly, smirking wider when she stared at him in growing desire, her green eyes becoming more and more disoriented when he dipped them slightly, pausing mid-dance to trace his lips down the tantalizing skin of her smooth, creamy neck.

“Y—Yes...” She managed to whisper, shivering again and her mind growing hazy when Anton caressed his hand up her bare back along her spine, stopping just behind her neck before pulling her face closer towards his.

“Well...It magically drugs hormones mostly... strengthens the attraction tenfold...And it uses it to overcome the senses...Dominating the will of the one being seduced...It’s very powerful if the veela hones the skill and knows exactly how to use it.” He murmured, leaning closer towards her lips and stopping several inches away to smirk at the expression on her face.

“I—I see...” She stammered, unable to neither think nor process any rational thought as she found her hands beginning to wrap themselves around his neck, pulling him desperately closer towards her. Just as their lips had met, she winced when she felt someone crash rather painfully behind them, forcing them to break apart.

Failing to see the highly furious flashing in Anton’s blue eyes, Jaimee blinked dazedly up into the anxious face of Hermione while at the same time vaguely trying to remember what had just happened within the last couple of minutes.

“H—Hermione?” She managed to ask weakly in confusion, still blinking up at the brunette as Hermione glared daggers at the sneering blonde who had once again gathered her best friend into his possessively into his arms.

“Hello, Miss Granger...You are looking very lovely tonight. Was there anything you wanted?” Anton asked casually, sneering wider when he noticed Viktor Krum tugging impatiently on Hermione’s arm in an attempt to continue their dancing.

Hermione’s eyes hardened as she met Anton’s sneer with a disgusted snarl. She looked over at Jaimee, patting the girl’s cheek gently and snapping her fingers in front of her eyes to prod her back to her senses. When Jaimee finally came around, Hermione turned to look at Anton again – noting the way the blonde’s jaw had clenched in agitation.

"I know all about you, Malfoy... And if you know what's good for you...You'll keep your disgusting veela charm to yourself. Otherwise, I'm sure Professor McGonagall would be very interested in hearing about how you use such underhanded means to harass her students." She hissed, causing Anton's fists to clench tightly at her threat.

"Sorry, I must have lost myself in thought. What did I miss?" Jaimee suddenly chimed in cheerfully, looking completely oblivious and curiously glancing back and forth between Anton, Hermione and even Viktor as though Anton's failed seduction ploy had never happened.

"So...Little Miss Head Girl Granger is going to tell on me, is she? Well, I can't have that...Don't worry, Hermione...I'll take good care of Jaimee." Anton drawled lazily, smirking once more when he offered his arm to Jaimee and purposely ignoring the scathing look he was receiving from the head girl of Hogwarts.

"Jaimee, I think you're exhausted from all that dancing. Why don't I take you outside for some fresh air? I'd also like to introduce you to some of my friends..." He offered, smirking in satisfaction when she decidedly nodded and took his arm, turning to look in surprise at Hermione's warning glare.

"Mione, what's wrong? You look like you want to say something—" Jaimee looked concerned but before Hermione could even attempt to say anything, Anton was already off dragging the other girl off towards the sea of guests outside while Viktor likewise pulled Hermione towards the dance floor, both Gryffindors effectively and unfortunately separated by the two men for the rest of the night.

"Hey stranger..."

Looking up from his glass of champagne from where he stood by the refreshment table, Draco found himself staring into the lovely, elegant smile of a dark-haired Helen of Troy, her bright green eyes watching him carefully for his reaction. Sneering, Draco simply cocked an eyebrow before turning to stride across the dance floor but the girl hurriedly ran after him and grabbed his arm with a desperate grunt.

“No, wait! Draco, please! Listen to me—”

“What’s wrong, Cartwright? Was the world not as glamorous as you expected when Anton gave it to you?” He mocked callously, narrowing his eyes as he stopped and allowed her to see the disgust on his face as he stared her down from his towering height.

Elisa bit her lip uncertainly, twirling a stray curl around a single finger as she thought of what to say. Seeing the familiar gesture, Draco’s mouth curled into another disgusted sneer as he noticed for the first time exactly how superficial she truly was.

“I—I...I wanted to apologize for what happened before...I’m sorry. I’m so sorry, Draco! I know it was stupid of me to leave you and I know that now but if you could just hear me out—I miss you so much, I—” She stopped when she saw his eyes darken into a menacing dark gray.

“You miss me? That’s funny; I heard Uncle Louis paid you and your mother off with a generous sum of money as an apology for breaking off your engagement with Anton. You should still have some money to spend before you start missing me. Or is it all gone already?” He mocked harshly, downing his drink in a single gulp before hurling the glass to the floor, causing her to wince as she heard the crystal shattering near her feet.

“What is it you want, Elisa? You came all this way here tonight...I heard about your broken engagement. How unfortunate. Frankly, Anton’s here right now too trying to double-cross me again. Have you come to help him out?” He drawled and he would have turned away again had Elisa not attached herself tearfully to his arm.

“Draco, please! I was under his spell! He put a veela charm on me, baby! I didn’t know what I was doing! Please, you’ve got to believe me! I would never have gone with him otherwise; I want to be with you!” She cried dramatically, sobbing against him as she forcefully buried her face into his chest, causing the Slytherin to stiffen in revulsion, trying to shove her away.

“You lying, manipulative little slut.” He snarled, managing to push her away from him so she could look up at the cold sneer on his handsome face. She blinked tearfully up at him again, her beautiful eyes stained with mascara and her lips quivering pleadingly.

He would have laughed at the expression on her face but instead, he reached forward and seized the huge diamond necklace hanging from her neck, raising it up to meet her eyes. “You still wear this, don’t you? Does it have sentimental value to you?” He asked spitefully, a leer on his face as he caressed the enormous diamond in his fingers.

She blinked at him before placing her hand over his, caressing his long, pale fingers before bring them to her lips. “Of course I do, love...You gave it to me...” She whispered pitifully, kissing his fingers before looking up at him again with wide, imploring green eyes.

Draco merely smirked again, yanking the necklace roughly from her neck and breaking the chain around it, causing her to gasp in shock as he held it up to her eyes so she could gaze at it in confusion.

“Draco, what are you doing—?”

“Yes...I gave this to you...The night before you met Anton, my sweet...It’s enchanted...Do you know what it does?” He asked her in a soft, dangerous voice and at the anger and irritation in Elisa’s widening green eyes, he continued – ignoring the dancers watching around them.

“Draco, please! My darling, I love you—”

“It’s enchanted...with immunity to the veela allure...darling.” He spat out, hurling the diamond necklace at the dance floor in disgust and causing her to gasp out loud again as it slid several meters away from them to stop underneath one of the tables.

Looking at him with an angry, indignant glare that she replaced instantly with a feigned tearful expression, Elisa sobbed and hastily ran after it – dropping to her knees and desperately searching under the table for the large, exquisite jewel.

Shaking his head at the pathetic sight, Draco gave her one last sneer before turning to walk out of the castle towards his family gathered outside – more than determined to erase the very memory of Elisa Cartwright from his life.

He failed to notice the dark, sinister snarl on Elisa's face as she carefully stood back up and watched him leave, caressing the diamond necklace reverently against her gloved hands. Narrowing her eyes, she smiled to herself, magically repairing the necklace's clasp before slipping it back around her neck, turning to admire her reflection on the marble surface of the dance floor.

"You'll pay for your actions Draco, my love..." She whispered under her breath, sneering once more before turned and headed back towards her table.

"Jaimee, I'd like you to meet my cousins." Anton began, a calm smirk on his face as he led Jaimee directly into a circle of silver-blond, good-looking aristocrats gathered by the archery near the lake – all of which matched the superior smirk on Anton's own face when they recognized her.

Oh great...More rich, haughty Malfoys to torment me...This will be the highlight of my night. She thought sarcastically to herself, trying not to roll her eyes as Anton began pointing to each of them one by one.

"This is Alexandra, Nadine, and Elaine. They're all married with families of their own." He began, gesturing to a group of beautiful blonde girls that looked several years older than Jaimee. All three ladies inclined their heads silently towards her in greeting, which she returned with an awkward wave and grimace – unsure of how to respond to them lest they judged her accordingly.

"This is Byron, Reginald and William...They're our age. They attend Sapientia's School for the Elite in France." Anton continued, pointing to three rather handsome looking young men who were looking at Jaimee with a mixture of interest and amusement in their eyes.



While Reginald and William both possessed the classic Malfoy blonde hair and refined features, Byron's perfectly swept back hair was jet black and his eyes were an interesting shade of golden brown. She noticed, however, that the three men – although undoubtedly handsome themselves —did not compare at all to Draco or Anton's stunningly attractive features.

Waiting until Reginald and William had finished kissing Jaimee's gloved hand, Byron stepped forward and placed a brief kiss on the back of her palm, raising an eyebrow at her confused look.

"I've always thought all Malfoy children had blonde hair..."

At this, the small group erupted into a series of light chuckles before Anton answered her rather blunt question with a smirk. "Most of us do...It's a dominant gene in our blood, you see. However, Byron here is an exception as he is – what most people would like to call – a metamorphagus." He told her, causing her to look at the said Malfoy in keen interest.

Byron grinned at that and shook his head, transforming his black hair into the perpetual Malfoy blonde before turning to give her a warm smile. "Is that better?" He asked teasingly, causing Jaimee to nod with an embarrassed laugh.

"I'm sorry, you can change it back. I was just curious." She told him, causing him to grin wider and rake his hand over his hair, transforming it back into midnight black. "I actually prefer my hair to be black, actually. I think it suits me better." He told her, winking and causing the rest of the family to roll their eyes in amusement.

"Don't worry...I think so too. It's refreshing to see a dark-haired Malfoy." She told him with a reassuring smile which he returned with a brief incline of his head.

"So...Jaimee...What's a sweet girl such as yourself doing with a sleaze like Anton?" Alexandra had piped up, immediately causing Anton to snap his gaze at her and level her with a silencing glare. She ignored this however, and looked at Jaimee with a friendly smile.

Silently deciding that the Malfoys didn't seem to be as bad as they expected, Jaimee smiled back and shrugged, giving Anton a smirk before answering. "I don't know, really...He seems interesting enough. Is there something I should know about him too?" She asked jokingly, failing to see Anton's stiffened stance behind her as he gave his cousins a warning sneer.

"He has two faces. Literally." Elaine drawled with a sneer at her cousin. Anton smiled good-naturedly at her quip but it didn't reach his eyes as the icy blue orbs turned menacing at her words.

"So...How are you and our cousin, Draco? I've heard he's made plans to court you this season." Reginald had spoken up, drawing Jaimee's attention to his friendly, chocolate brown eyes. Inwardly concluding that she liked him as well as Byron, she gave him a warm smile.

Before she could answer his question, they all heard a familiar drawling voice behind them, causing them all to turn around to see Draco striding toward them from the inside of the Hogwarts castle with a rather tense smirk on his face.

"Reggie, that's a personal matter between Potter and myself, isn't it? You know better than that." He replied easily, smiling at his cousins before his gaze softened when he saw Jaimee's blushing, beautiful face.

The Slytherin's eyes seemed to hardened immediately, however, when he caught sight of Jaimee's arm clasping Anton's and without thinking, she immediately dropped it as though it had caught on fire – something that the half-veela didn't particularly find amusing.

"Where's Lorraine? Have you lost her already, Draco?" Byron asked in amusement, pretending to shake his head in disapproval but Draco just scoffed at his teasing smirk, rolling his eyes in mild annoyance.

"How should I know? I only agreed to escort her... Winchester took her from me about an hour ago, I haven't seen her since then." He snapped, letting his gaze travel around the lake to watch the small

group of pureblooded bachelors that were amusing themselves by the archery range.

“You left her with Winchester – that pompous, loud-mouthed idiot? Lorraine hates him, what were you thinking?” Byron pointed out, giving Draco a disapproving look and at hearing those words, Jaimee grinned to herself and decided – once again – that out of all the Malfoy cousins, she liked Byron immensely.

As though he heard her silent compliment, he turned and gave her a saucy wink. “I know what you’re thinking, sweetheart. You think that just because we’re the Malfoys, we’re a bunch of snooty, brainless stuck-up aristocrats who talk about nothing but money and themselves. Well just to clarify, only Anton and Elaine here do that.” He kidded, causing both mentioned Malfoys to sneer at him in evident dislike.

Draco couldn’t prevent the laugh that escaped from his mouth at his cousin’s quip, shaking his head and smiling when he looked up and saw Jaimee laughing as well, her eyes twinkling in mirth as she met his briefly just before Byron spoke up again.

“Now, let me give you a proper introduction of our lovely, dysfunctional family and not like that crappy, stuffy drabble dear Anton gave you awhile ago.” He continued, smiling widely and purposely ignoring the way Anton’s narrowed eyes were beginning to darken in fury at his mockery.

Walking over to Draco, Byron threw an arm around his shoulders, playfully clapping the taller Malfoy loudly on the back. “This really handsome fellow over here...is the boss. I like to call him the big D for deal because truly, he is the biggest deal here. He’s the current Malfoy heir and the smartest among all of us, as you can probably tell.” He began, wincing when Draco impatiently shoved him off himself with flashing silver eyes.

“Byron...”

Ignoring the evident threat in Draco’s warning, Byron continued amidst Jaimee’s amused giggles as well as his other cousins’

chuckles at his antics. "This handsome little devil over here—" He now threw an arm around Reginald, who gave him a weak, amused grin in response.

"—is Reggie. You should know, he's a really nice and approachable guy...Sometimes too nice for a Malfoy if you know what I mean. Draco always tells him to grow some balls—"

"Byron." Alexandra warned with a pointed glare, causing the dark-haired Malfoy to hastily amend his words.

"I—I mean, to become more... aggressive. That's the word! In any case, he's harmless and a rather loveable at that." He added jokingly, pausing to teasingly ruffle Reginald's hair which the other boy struggled halfheartedly against, his shoulders shaking in helpless laughter.

Draco watched Jaimee laughing at his cousin's antics, admiring the ease of her smile and the way her eyes had suddenly begun to relax for the first time that night since he'd seen her. Feeling his eyes on her, she looked up and met his gaze for a moment with bright green eyes.

Giving her a brief smile, he shook his head at her with a rueful grin as though to silently apologize but she giggled and waved it off. They smiled at each other for a moment before Draco inclined his head towards his cousins again as Byron was now wrestling with a disgruntled William.

"Now William over here is actually the youngest Malfoy son...He's the baby of the group, isn't he adorable?" He quipped, pausing to pinch the other boy's cheek. William growled and batted the offending arm away, much to the others' hearty smiles and laughter.

Anton tightened his arm around Jaimee and leaned in to whisper something in Jaimee's ear, his voice sounding restrained with anger and outrage. "I'll speak to them about their behavior later. I apologize." He whispered but Jaimee looked at him in surprise, her eyebrows fusing together in confusion.

“No, no...I’m fine. I actually think your family is quite adorable actually...Well at least not at all like what I had expected! I—”

“They’re acting like fools! This is not how a prestigious family is supposed to behave.” He hissed angrily at her and at seeing his ire, Jaimee narrowed her eyes at him as though she was seeing him for the first time, shaking her head in disbelief over his actions.

Before she could bite back a retort at him, Byron had called for her attention again, drawing her gaze to how he was now gesturing to his three female cousins with a wide grin. “Now these three, I like to refer to as see-no-evil, hear-no-evil and speak-no-evil. Let me explain why.” He told her, walking over to Alexandra and placing both his hands over her eyes.

Watching the older girl bat his hands away, Draco finally allowed himself to join in their laughter and watched with helplessly shaking shoulders as Byron continued trying to cover Alexandra’s beautifully made eyes with his hands.

“Excuse me for a moment, Jaimee. I’ll be back.” Anton spoke up again in an irritated whisper, bowing slightly to her to excuse himself before walking towards his father with long, purposeful strides. Jaimee barely heard him, however, as she found herself staring at Draco’s laughing face – noticing for the first time how incredibly handsome he looked that night and how completely carefree and comfortable he was in the presence of his family.

Noticing her staring, he looked up and smiled again before walking over to her and slowly taking her hand into his – intertwining their fingers together. Blushing profusely at this, she tried to ignore the way her skin tingled at his touch and instead turned back to watch Byron exclaiming loudly when a highly irate Alexandra finally punched him hard in the shoulder.

“Argh! Bitch! Anyway! She’s see-no-evil because she’s keenly, sometimes scarily observant. She knows everything that goes around her so you have to be careful in her presence.” Byron told Jaimee, grinning when the girl nodded wordlessly in response.

Alexandra smirked at her, her eyes dropping down to Draco and Jaimee's intertwined hands. "It doesn't really take much observation skills to notice the obvious sexual tension between you two." She noted, instantly causing Jaimee to redden further and nearly drop Draco's hand had the Slytherin not tightened it further around her fingers.

"Be careful, Alex." Draco warned her, his own face reddening in embarrassment as he fought to keep his features composed at her words. Alexandra smiled sweetly at him, much to everyone else's amusement.

Byron grinned at that, nodding before turning around to wrap his arm around Nadine's slim shoulders. "Nadine, on the other hand, is speak-no-evil because she lacks a certain skill that people like to call tact. She's horribly blunt that most of the time, it gets her into trouble with Uncle Lucius." He told her, sniggering when Nadine merely narrowed her eyes at him in disinterest.

Turning to Jaimee, she gave her a genuinely sincere smile. "I like you better than that other bitch Draco introduced to us before... You actually seem to be sincere about him. Draco, why don't you just tell her how you feel so you two can shag already?" She told her, causing both Draco and Jaimee's eyes to widen at her directness and Elaine to shush her for her language.

"What other bitch?" Jaimee turned to look at Draco but the Slytherin was shaking his head warningly at Nadine, who simply smiled at him before flipping perfect platinum curls over her shoulder.

"And last but not least, Elaine! She is, as I said awhile ago... Hear-no-evil because quite frankly, she's a gossip-hungry monger. She spreads gossip like fire, I'm telling you! She hangs out with all of those other brainless pureblood twats who—"

"Shut up, Byron! How dare you insult me?! I'm telling Father!" Elaine had snapped, shoving him away from her and stomping her foot in frustration before turning to walk away in an obvious tantrum.

Shrugging at both Draco and Reggie's accusing glares at him, Byron sighed dramatically and finally pointed to himself with a flourish. "And finally, I'm Byron...I'm the only one in this family with a decent sense of humor and without me, they'll all be boring and dull. It's a pleasure to meet you, Harry." He said, winking playfully at her as she gave him another bright smile at actually having him address her by her original name.

"He doesn't act like it, Jaimee...But this idiotic prick over here is actually the top student at Sapientia's. He's just a little bit insane." William told her, rolling his eyes as Byron punched him lightly on the shoulder in response.

"The real baby of the family is actually Lorraine. She's older than William but she's the one that all of us spoil with affection. She and Byron are really close, though...More than she is with Draco. She really likes to laugh, you see. She's probably the only one among us who actually enjoys Byron's twisted sense of humor." Alexandra added, much to Jaimee's surprise.

"Anton, on the other hand...Well...He's a character. He and Draco here have been at odds with each other since they were born. He doesn't really get along with the rest of the family, though...We honestly only tolerate his presence for Lorraine's sake." William added further in explanation, causing Jaimee look confused.

Byron grinned widely, winking at Draco. "I actually like to refer to Anton as two-face for more than one reason—"

"Byron, that's enough." Draco interrupted with an easy note of authority in his voice, immediately causing the other Malfoy to simmer down. The grin remained on his face, however, as he met Jaimee's confused, inquiring gaze.

Then, still grinning he walked over to her and peered closely at her exquisite features – causing Draco to scowl at him in anger and shove him slightly away. Laughing at the jealousy in his cousin's face, he gave the Gryffindor a disarming smile.

“Now that introductions are over, I’d like to say that we are all really honored to finally meet the girl of Draco’s dreams. You are... bloody beautiful, by the way...It’s a pity the Big D saw you first.” He mused, causing Draco to growl again.

“Byron, don’t call me that—”

Jaimee interrupted his warning, however, as she finally spoke up – looking at each of their faces with an expression of genuine surprise and warmth. “You know I have to be really honest with all of you...I truly didn’t expect for you all to be...Well...” She wracked her mind for the correct word.

“Human?” Reggie supplied for her with a grin, causing her to laugh and nod ruefully in embarrassment. The fair-haired boy simply shrugged, taking a sip of his drink before answering. “Most people don’t...We do look a bit intimidating from the outside but that’s only because we’re a close, safely guarded family. We only open up to whom we want to open up...In private, we Malfoys are actually more closely-knitted than you think.” He told her, causing her to smile and nod in understanding.

Squeezing her hand, Draco turned to grace her with a view of his left dimple as he smiled. “That’s about the best way of saying ‘we like you’ from them that you could possibly get. We’re not really familiar with giving compliments, you see.” He told her, causing her to smirk pointedly at him.

“I can see why you’re so charming then.” She retorted sarcastically, causing Draco’s smile to fade into a weak glare at her and the other Malfoys around them to chuckle wholeheartedly in amusement.

Then, his smirk turning warm with fond amusement, Byron stepped forward and placed a hand on Jaimee’s shoulder, drawing the girl’s attention back to him. “I think you’ll fit right in here, Potter.” He drawled, winking and chuckling when he saw the intense blush on the girl’s face.

She would have answered him but at that precise moment, Anton had returned with a handsome, composed smile on his face which he



directed towards Byron. "Byron, I believe my father would like to speak to you for a few minutes." He drawled, immediately extinguishing the light humor in the other boy's face and replacing it the cold, Malfoy sneer.

"I figured." He muttered under his breath, shaking his head as he excused himself from their group and walked off towards the older Malfoys. Watching him go briefly with a sneer, Anton looked pleased with himself before turning to offer Jaimee his arm again.

"Well, Jaimee...I'd like to introduce you to some more friends of mine over by the archery—" He stopped when he saw Jaimee and Draco's tightly intertwined hands and just as his jaw had clenched in anger, Alexandra had spoken up hastily —drawing his attention to her devious smile.

"Anton, dear cousin...My husband seems to be lost somewhere in the crowd and I do love this song they're playing. Would you care to dance with me, please?" She asked him, offering him her gloved hand and obviously giving him no chance to refuse.

Anton's eyes narrowed further. "I hardly think this is the time for—"

"Anton, how dare you refuse an older woman's request for a dance...? A Malfoy is not disrespectful, go and dance with Alexandra." Nadine said coolly, raising a perfectly plucked eyebrow at him. Stifling a low growl in his throat, he bowed stiffly towards them and left with a smirking Alexandra towards the dance floor, leaving Jaimee to sigh in relief and Draco to smirk at his female cousin's antics in amusement.

"I could have handled him on my own you know." He drawled easily but Reggie rolled his eyes at him, giving him a pointed smile. "We know that...You've always held out with more control over your anger than Anton has. Why don't you tour Jaimee around the archery and introduce her to some family friends? I'm sure she'll appreciate that." Reggie suggested, giving Draco an urging smile.

Realizing their intentions, Jaimee smiled to herself but said nothing and waved goodbye to the remaining Malfoys as Draco put a hand on

her slim waist and began leading her towards the archery in the direction of a small group of purebloods that were gathered near the lake's edge.

"Your family is very interesting." She told him, causing him to turn and reward her with a small, wry grin. "They seem to think you're interesting too. They're like a pack of vultures really... They see right through you if you're not being sincere...They really liked you." He responded, causing her to blush and smile again in thought.

Draco stopped them right behind a group of wizards who were all waiting patiently for the man in front of them to shoot his arrow into the target several meters away before turning to face her again. "Harry...I just...I want to tell you..." He trailed off uncertainly, biting his lip as Jaimee raised an eyebrow at him in amusement.

"Yep, Malfoy...?" She asked, smirking as his eyes seemed to rake over her entire form with a hunger that she knew too well before resting on her face again, the silver orbs softening in admiration.

A slow, sexy grin spread out onto his face and he reached up and trailed his hand down her bare arm, caressing the silky smooth skin. "You look so goddamn gorgeous tonight...Persephone suits you perfectly." He told her, watching her eyes gleam in pleasure.

"You know...I've been meaning to ask you... How did you know right away that I was Persephone? Everybody else seemed to think I was Aphrodite." She asked him in amazement, shaking her head and laughing softly in disbelief.

Draco shot her an arrogant smirk, raising a pointed eyebrow. "You honestly doubted me, my queen of the underworld?" He easily replied, watching the Gryffindor roll her eyes at his words. Still smirking, he reached over and yanked her roughly towards him, wrapping both his arms around her waist. She gasped in shock and glared at him, trying to struggle free.

"So...I guess that makes me Hades, huh...? Shall I whisk you away now and make you mine for all eternity...?" He whispered

breathlessly into her ear, his lips brushing against the skin of her earlobes and causing her body temperature to rise several degrees.

She opened her mouth to tell him off but they were soon stopped by two pureblooded wizards walking over to join them, causing Draco to release her instantly and look up in recognition. One of the men – Philippe Winchester – smiled cordially and handed Draco and Jaimee a glass of champagne while the other built, muscular bachelor clapped Draco on the back in friendly acknowledgment.

“Malfoy! We were just wondering where you’d gone off to...Why don’t you introduce us to your incredibly...scrumptious...tart over here?” The muscular bachelor had spoken out loud, letting his beady eyes linger unnecessarily over Jaimee’s body.

Feeling an angry twinge of ire at having been referred to as a pastry, she clenched her hands into tight fists. Draco answered the boy with a slight note of threat in his voice. “Cunningham...This is Jaimee Potter... Jaimee, this is Oswald Cunningham, another good friend of the family.” He introduced, instantly causing a mocking smirk to break out onto Jaimee’s face as she turned to the leering muscular boy again.

“Your first name is Oswald..?” She asked bluntly, causing Draco to cover his smile with his hand and even Philippe hide his snort of laughter into his wine glass. Hearing the mockery in her voice, Oswald’s eyes narrowed angrily and he shot her a sneer.

“She’s a rather disrespectful chit, Malfoy...Maybe you should put her in her proper place. She needs to learn some manners.” He drawled darkly, a menacing glare on his face that Jaimee simply met with a mocking smile.

“In that case, maybe you should go to a nearby library instead of the gym and work off some brain cells for a change, mate.” She retorted easily, causing Draco to hide another smirk as Oswald’s eyes bulged in anger almost as though they were going to pop out of their sockets.

Philippe instantly cut into their conversation before Oswald could say anything else, drawing Jaimee’s attention to his smirking face. “Well,

Miss Potter...It's fortunate you're here. We were just going to regal Draco with a lesson in proper archery. Now... You see the tall, skinny guy over there?" He began, pointing to a sandy-haired bachelor standing a couple of meters away from a small red and white target board.

Seeing her amused nod, he continued – beginning to lead them to the direction he had pointed at. "That's Edward Haskins...A rather personal friend of ours and an excellent archer. Watch and learn." He told her with a smug smile, waving at Edward who waved back briefly before picking up a bow and arrow and readying his aiming stance.

"Do you know how to use a bow and arrow, Draco?" Jaimee whispered to him from where she was walking beside him and at that, Draco gave her a secretive smile, shrugging.

"I've...held an arrow once or twice before..." He offered, grinning once more before looking back up and watching as Edward raised his bow again and shot the arrow in a neat line towards the target, managing to hit it a couple of centimeters off the bull's-eye.

Philippe and Oswald both clapped enthusiastically, cheering as Edward grinned and walked over to them, his arrow still in hand. "Well, I'm glad to see that a lady was at least able to see my shot." He began breathlessly, giving Jaimee a friendly smile which she easily returned.

Then, turning to a smirking Draco, he offered the bow and arrow in his hand with an encouraging grin. "How about it, Malfoy? You want to try and show off for her?" He teased, causing Jaimee to laugh and Draco to smirk again but otherwise wave the offer away.

"Oh no, Edward...I don't think so. I'd rather not step out onto the mud and stain these black shoes—"

"Aw come on, Malfoy! You're such a sissy. Don't be such a girl." Jaimee teased mockingly, causing the other bachelors to laugh and Draco's eyes to flash in both indignation and good humor as he met her challenging gaze.

Then, eyes narrowed to meet her challenge, he cocked a single eyebrow before taking the bow from Edward's hands and striding purposefully towards the target, standing a good couple of meters farther than Edward had done.

Looking up to meet Jaimee's taunting smirk, Draco winked at her before he quickly steadied his aim and shot the arrow in a perfect line towards the target board – landing it smack in the very middle of the small red bull's-eye. When Philippe, Oswald and Edward had all cheered, Draco looked back to see Jaimee smiling at him, crossing her arms over her chest and shaking her head in laughter.

In spite of himself, he smiled back and watched as Philippe led her forward by her arm and offered her another arrow. "Would you like to try, Miss Jaimee? It's perfectly safe, I'll teach you so you needn't worry about hurting yourself." Philippe offered boastfully, guiding her to the spot beside Draco. Meeting the Slytherin's eyes, she shot him a sardonic grin.

"I'll...try not to hurt myself, Winchester..." She drawled but only Draco caught onto her sarcastic tone of voice. He watched with twinge of jealousy as Philippe wrapped his arms around her to help her position her arrow into a perfect aiming stance, the dark-haired boy failing to see the highly amused twitching of her lips.

Draco's jealousy soon gave way to curiosity, however, as he watched Harry pretending to nod and listen carefully to Philippe's instructions while at the same time, shooting him playful grins and winks every now and then.

"Alright...So now you're in position. So what you do with this thing is—"

"Winchester, what I do with this thing is kick your arse!" She interrupted with an unladylike whoop, grinning at the look of utter shock on his face when she shrugged his arms off her and shot the arrow with the ease and expertise that matched Draco's skill, hitting the target in an even more perfect center than his arrow had.

Draco couldn't have wiped the smirk off his face if he wanted to as he looked into all three of his friends' shocked faces, noting how their jaws were hanging open and their eyes were bulging out as they stared at the target board in disbelief.

Casually eyeing the batch of remaining arrows on the grass, Jaimee turned and offered Philippe a quirky, exaggeratingly feminine smile. "Thank you for your instructions. Was there anything else you gentlemen would like to teach me...?" She asked, batting her eyelashes innocently at them.

Shaking their heads in stupefied silence, Jaimee walked over and held out her hand to Draco – who took it instantly and linked it through his arm, highly amused at her impertinence. She was just about to hand him the bow when she heard Oswald mutter angrily under his breath behind them, causing her to stiffen in annoyance.

"Miserable little whore...Beginner's luck. She's better off staying as a man with such manners." He growled and Draco barely had any time to react when Jaimee's eyes had narrowed dangerously and she seized another arrow off the grass, aiming her bow towards Oswald's sneering face.

"Potter don't—!"

Draco's words died in his throat as Jaimee shifted her aim downwards towards Oswald's crotch and she released, instantly causing Philippe and Edward to exclaim in panic when the arrow had neatly sliced off the button on Oswald's trousers – causing them to slip to the ground.

At Oswald's terrified, high-pitched shriek, Draco, Philippe and Edward – as well as some of the other guests around them who had witnessed the little spectacle – all burst out laughing at the sight of the pureblooded heir's heart-shaped patterned boxers. His face red with indignation as he tried to desperately yank his pants back up, Oswald snarled furiously at Jaimee who had tossed the bow to the grass with a calm smile.

“What do you know...? I suppose I am a beginner... I was aiming for your crotch...bastard.” She drawled sarcastically, causing Draco to laugh harder and both Philippe and Edward to cringe at the added insult to their fellow bachelor.

Offering the three other gaping wizards a mockingly exaggerated debutante curtsy, she turned and offered Draco her gloved hand once more. He took it and rewarded it with a kiss before escorting her back inside the castle with a satisfied grin on his handsome face.

A/N: Phew! That was rather long one! Haha. And more is still to come! Weee! The last chapter will probably be along the same length as this one too so look out for that. Just some trivia: the next chapter is actually my FAVORITE in the ENTIRE story. :giggles mischievously: It focuses on Draco/Harry while at the same time, shedding a little light on Blaise/Hermione and Sirius as well so yeah, that's something to look forward to. But of course, before I post it...You guys all have to REVIEW FIRST! :wink-wink:

DIE, ELISA! DIE!!!! AVADA KEDAVRA!

ANTON, GO TO BLOODY HELL!

I love the Malfoy cousins...I think they're so cute.

Harry rocks! :cheers:

What do you guys think? Like it so far? REVIEW and TELL ME! Mwah!

## Chapter 19 – All's Fair in LOVE and WAR

“Regina...?”

Blinking in surprise, the red-haired woman looked up and redirected her smile from her beautiful daughter across the room to the handsome, dark-haired man who had walked up to her, giving her the same agonizingly impish grin he used to seventeen years ago.

Sirius ducked his hand sheepishly behind his head, gesturing briefly to the dance floor behind them before raising a hand and offering it to her from where she still sat in her table.

“I know it’s been seventeen years...But I’m still a pretty good dancer, if I do say so myself. Would you...care to dance with me?” He asked, still grinning when she promptly blushed but slipped her hand into his and nodded, allowing him to pull her among the other thread of dancers swaying gracefully around them.

Placing a hand around her waist, he began to lead her into a slow but elegant waltz, watching as Regina paused every now and then to look up ahead and make sure Keira was still in her line of sight.

She was so caught up in this particular task that she failed to notice Sirius’ amused grin at her right away and when she did, she glared at him and narrowed her eyes. “What’s so amusing, Black?” She mock growled, raising an eyebrow at his amusement.

Sirius shook his head in amazement, laughing lightly to himself as he spoke. “It’s just...funny, I suppose. Regina Vallehan – the most self-centered and sought-after girl I knew...Who once spoke to me numerous times of how she was terrified of having children because it would ruin her figure is now such a dedicated, passionate mother.” He mused, causing her to redden in embarrassment.

In spite of this, she laughed in agreement and shook her head as she thought of how she had once been. “I know...I find it rather ironic, myself. I used to be so self-centered and self-obsessed back then...But when I had Keira, everything seemed to change and I realized that I was no longer responsible for myself anymore. And I



could no longer afford to be selfish.” She told him, watching as Sirius’ eyes saddened slightly at her words.

Following her gaze to look at Keira, his eyes glazed over with images of what could have been his life without the war – something he had thought about every day since he had lost his friends. “What’s it like then, Gina...? Having a child, that is...?” He asked her softly as he spun her around, causing Regina to smile tenderly at the forgotten nickname.

“It’s the most wonderful feeling in the world...Knowing that you helped create this one person...Having her look up at you with the same eyes...The same button nose...” She trailed off, losing her words but Sirius chuckled teasingly at that and gave her a grin.

“So it’s still self-centeredness, then...You see your own face in your daughter so that’s why you love her so much? You narcissistic woman.” He kidded lightly, causing her to blink in surprise before giggling heavily in amusement and realization.

“I never thought about it that way. You’re such a jerk, Black.” She retorted in half-irritation, half-mirth but she looked surprised when she saw the sudden somber expression in his dark eyes that soon pegged the way for the sudden, unexpected question he asked next.

“Why did you marry Nigel Hammerstone, Gina...?”

Seeing the all too familiar look in his eyes, Regina sighed and looked away from him, hiding her face to keep her emotions from showing. They were tensely silent for a long moment, dancing among the others with the easy grace of a couple both born in the same aristocratic lineage but otherwise lifeless as they refused to look at the other’s face.

Then, after what seemed like ages, she finally spoke, keeping her attention focused on staring at the buttons of his shirt. “I couldn’t just put my life on hold for you, Sirius...” She whispered, sighing as she suddenly felt a deadweight on her chest at her own admission.

Sirius spun her around again slowly before speaking up, his voice sounding restrained with accusation. "I wasn't expecting you to wait for me, Regina...I'm asking you why —out of all the men who were courting you that season – why did you choose the one person you must have known would make you unhappy?" He asked angrily, his voice hoarse with impatience.

She stiffened in his arms and her eyes flashed as she looked up and met his angry expression with a dignified, defiant lifting of her chin. "That is none of your goddamn business, Black. Stay out of my life. You have no right to ask me such things." She snapped, giving him a cold glare before disentangled herself from him and made to walk away.

He caught her wrist, however, and tugged on her gently until she looked back at him and saw the genuine regret on his handsome face. "Why, Regina? Do you not realize how much it hurts to see you hurting the way you are now? Why did you marry him?" He asked again, the anger in his voice more controlled but still clear in his eyes.

She sighed, closing her eyes and wanting to avoid having to answer the one question she had evaded since the day she got married. Apparently, Sirius seemed to read her thoughts and tilted her chin up with a single finger to meet his expectant, patient eyes, clearly awaiting a response.

Taking another deep breath, she met his eyes, noting how his gaze was both gentle yet admonishing at the same time. "When I found out you had gone to Azkaban, I was distraught. I never left my room for months. My mother was the one who agreed to the marriage with Nigel's father. And I suppose...I was so distraught about I just wanted so much to make the pain go away that I just went along with it...I'm sorry." She whispered softly, looking away when she saw him wince at her words.

"I'm sorry I ruined your life..." He said sadly, a heavy feeling of guilt and shame in his chest as he realized how much he had destroyed not only himself but also the lives of the people who loved him the night he set out to kill Peter Pettigrew and earned himself a ticket to Azkaban.

Regina shook her head fiercely at him when she spoke. "Don't say that, Sirius! Besides, it's all in the past now. Let's not talk about it anymore...okay? If anything, you should blame me or my mother —"

"That rotten, materialistic little snob! She and my mother would have gotten along perfectly!" He suddenly growled but he stopped when Regina hesitantly placed a hand over his shoulder, making him look at her soothing, otherwise sad smile.

"It doesn't matter now...Really, it doesn't. I don't want to think about regrets...I'm happy now with Keira...That's all that matters." She said, finally managing a tender smile as she looked over his shoulder back to gaze at her beautiful five-year-old daughter.

"Without her, I'd...be—"

She stopped instantly and stiffened, however, and a worried frown marred itself onto her paling features; causing Sirius' eyes to narrow and look at her anxiously in concern.

"What's wrong...?" He asked her, drawing her eyes to him and allowing him to see the slight fear in her normally calm blue eyes.

Swallowing the painful lump in her throat, her voice trembled slightly as she answered him.

"Where's Keira...?!"

Both Draco and Jaimee were still laughing as they walked back into the Great Hall, stopping just before the small sea of dancers. Looking ahead they watched as the couples began wrapping their arms around one another more intimately as the band began to move into a slow, romantic melody. Around them, the lights adorning the dancing area began to dim to allow for the romantic mood of the music, much to many of the dancing couples' satisfaction.

Chuckling to herself, Jaimee turned to give him a smile. "Well...I think I've just about ruled out my chances with him for the remainder of the season." She kidded lightly, her laughter dying out when Draco didn't

respond and was instead, looking at the dancing couples with a thoughtful expression on his handsome face.

Her face still flushed from exhilaration, Jaimee shifted nervously as the mirth in Draco's eyes eventually faded and gave way to a passionate intensity when he turned back to look at her, a slow, sensual smile forming on his lips.

"Dance with me, Harry..." He said softly, stepping forward and raising a hand up towards her. She stared at it for a long moment in silent confusion, a similar image suddenly flashing through her mind as she recalled a memory exactly six years ago – when he had offered his hand to her on the Hogwarts Express and she had blatantly refused his friendship.

Biting her lip, she let her eyes travel to his and noted the evident maturity in them that wasn't there before – as well as the glimmer of emotion that was directed toward her as he waited patiently for her to accept.

She took a deep breath, looking uncertain of herself. "I—I'm not so sure that's such a good idea, Draco..." She answered softly as she suddenly felt the weight of seven years of atrocity between the two of them weighing down upon her, pushing her away from him.

Draco didn't drop his hand but instead, steadied his gaze on her with an almost pleading expression in his beautiful eyes. "You turned me down once... Since then, I've been waiting seven years for you to take my hand... I'll wait all night here if I have to. Please... Give me your hand, Harry... I'm not the person I used to be." He said softly, watching the flurry of conflicting emotions running through the girl's face.

He understood her hesitation. If she took his hand now, there was no longer any turning back for either of them. He knew it as much as she did but the only difference for him was that he had long made that decision long ago. It was entirely her choice now.

"Draco... I... This is all going too fast for me... I don't know how I feel... About any of this at all... I find myself... feeling things I never

felt as a guy...I'm overwhelmed with so much emotions...so much feelings... that I don't know if any of it is real! I—”

He reached his offered hand forward and gently brought a finger to her lips, silencing her pained words. When she looked at him in confusion, he gave her a small, reassuring smile. “Shh...I know...I'm not asking for anything else...Just a dance, Harry...That's all...” He told her gently, stepping backward and once more offering her his hand.

“Dance with me, Harry...Let me remind you of the strong...beautiful...perfect person you always were...” He whispered again, feeling a wonderful bursting in his chest when Harry finally smiled and clasped his hand. She did not slip it through his hand like a debutante, however, but she had clasped his fingers with a strong, masculine grip –as an equal.

Draco allowed a rare, genuine smile as he matched the strength of her grip with his own, clasping her fingers tightly in his and intertwining them together before he began pulling her towards the very middle of the dance floor.

Then, closing their eyes as they let the music fill their ears they slowly melted against each other in a tight, intimate embrace – Draco's arms going to wrap around her slender waist and Jaimee's hands making their way up to clasp around his neck.

He held her tenderly as they swayed with the soft, beautiful melody of the music; drowning away the presence of all the other dancers around them as they instead focused on listening to the rhythm of the other's pounding heart. Sighing, she closed her eyes and rested her cheek against his shoulder, breathing in his wonderful scent and enjoying the feel of his hand as it went up to caress the bare skin of her back.

She felt him pull her closer as he leaned down briefly to place a gentle, reverent kiss on the scar on her forehead before leaning further down to whisper softly in her ear. “Harry James Potter...You are...beautiful...” His voice was breathless as he dropped a feather

light kiss on her cheek before burying his face into her neck to inhale her sweet, tempting scent.

“Now...Before...Always...”

His words stung her deep in her heart. They touched her immensely the way no words had before. She didn't know or understand why but they did and once more, she felt the rippling of unfamiliar, female feelings rising from her chest.

Harry wrenched her eyes shut just as a single tear escaped and went strolling down her cheek. She felt it – tidal waves of intense, violent emotions coursing through her entire body and overpowering her mind that she couldn't think or do anything but feel. She couldn't stand it. As a guy, she had never felt such powerful emotions before and she didn't know how to handle them now. She winced as she felt the inevitable clenching and unclenching of her chest.

Feeling her trembling in his arms, Draco looked down and blinked in surprise when he saw the single tear that had escaped the girl's otherwise clenched eyes. Unsure of what to say, he leaned forward and kissed the crescent drop away, causing her eyes to open and reveal mesmerizing pools of shimmering emeralds.

“P—Please...I—I...I d—don't know what I'm feeling right now...All these female emotions...It...aches...In...here...” She whispered, guiding his hand slowly to her heart and pressing it firmly there, allowing him to feel the strong pounding in her chest.

At this, Draco felt his own chest beginning to ache and he gave a pained groan before he dipped her backwards slowly, supporting her with his strong arms. The Gryffindor gasped in surprise and clung shakily onto him but her eyes soon clamped shut when she felt Draco kiss the spot on her chest where his hand had been, soothing...worshiping the throbbing of her heart with his lips.

“I'm sorry...For putting you through all this pain, Harry...I'm sorry...” He whispered aching in between kisses, his arms wrapping tighter around her but she was smiling softly now as she straightened them back up and gently placed her hands around his neck.

She saw the raw shame in his eyes before she leaned forward and pressed her lips against his, causing the Slytherin to gasp softly when she slipped her tongue through his mouth and gently began massaging his in a gesture of comfort and reassurance.

He brought his hand up behind her and pulled her closer towards him, deepening the kiss as he began to match her tongue's movements with his own. She moaned softly, pressing herself tighter against him, needing to feel every inch of him almost as though she was afraid he would disappear if she didn't. Draco responded by moving his hands caressingly up and down her bare back, admiring the silkiness of the skin and the way she shivered at the intimate contact.

The kiss grew slightly more desperate and heated and Jaimee found herself running her hands through the firm muscles along his shoulders while Draco began to take more control over their kiss, tasting her hungrily as his tongue roamed around her mouth with fierce a possessiveness that both scared and enticed her immensely.

Feeling the need for air, they broke apart reluctantly, staring into each other's flushed faces and watching the different emotions coursing through the others' eyes. With a small smile, she reached forward and traced the outline of his lips, watching as they quirked into the small, familiar smirk she had seen for years – sexy yet teasing and mischievous at the same time.

He matched her actions and began to caress her face, his eyes following the path his fingers created before she stopped just below the beautiful green eyes that were staring at him. His eyes widened slightly in realization before a small smile coursed through his mouth at the discovery.

"There you are, Harry..."

She blinked in confusion but she realized that he was indicating her eyes and she smiled back, the pain that had been in her chest now bursting into an explosion of intense happiness and giddiness that she couldn't do anything else but smile at him.

“I’ve always been here, Draco...” She answered back, still smiling when she saw Draco’s eyes soften at her words, his dimple clearly visible at the wide smile on his handsome face that matched hers.

Just as Draco looked as though he was going to lean forward again, they heard a rather scathing, drawling voice behind them and both looked up to see Anton walking over to them with a barely prevented, irritated scowl on his handsome face.

“There you are, Jaimee. I’ve been looking all over for you. I can’t believe Draco dragged you off here when he knew I was supposed to be escorting you to meet some of my friends.” He said, sneering at Draco as he purposely reached forward and unclasped Jaimee’s hands around the other blonde’s shoulders.

Ignoring the look of deadly murder in Draco’s eyes, Anton yanked a reluctant Jaimee into his arms, pulling her away from his cousin’s tense form. Highly irritated at having been mauled around like a sack of potatoes, Jaimee shrugged Anton’s vice-like grip from her hand and gave him an angry glare.

“Anton, I do not appreciate being dragged around like a common whore. I don’t want to go with you, I’m fine here—” She stopped when Anton merely looked her fiercely right in her eyes, causing the green orbs to dim and become disoriented just before her struggles ceased and she fell weakly with a sigh against his arms.

Smirking widely at the absolutely livid fury on Draco’s face, Anton was about to walk off with Jaimee still clutching dazedly at him when the Slytherin had finally stepped forward and grabbed him roughly by his collar, causing him to let go of the Jaimee in surprise.

At being released, Jaimee blinked and shook her head to clear away the remnants of the veela charm plaguing her mind, looking up just in time to see Anton promptly remove Draco’s hands from his collar with a look of disdain on his face.

She had just realized that she had been placed under the influence of Anton’s veela charm but before she could react on it, she heard



Draco's voice – recognizing instantly the restrained fury in them that she knew all too well from years of having been his archrival.

“You know, I've had just about enough of you and your pathetic little charm...” Draco spoke softly in a calm, smooth drawl that betrayed the vicious anger finally unleashed in his steely gray eyes.

Seeing the way Jaimee had looked at Anton in desire – even if it had been under the influence of the veela charm – had been the last straw. He found himself unable to control the growing rage in him any longer. Baring his teeth, he growled with a look of fiery death in his eyes that neither Anton nor Jaimee had ever seen before.

Noticing the imminent danger, Jaimee stiffened in alarm and watched as Draco slowly turned to look at his slightly smaller cousin with a sinister sneer on his face. Anton raised an eyebrow and promptly pushed Jaimee back possessively behind him, the look on his face growing into a menacing snarl.

“You don't want to anger me, Draco...You know how I get when I'm angry.” Anton murmured, a secret smirk on his lips that only Draco seemed to understand. He returned it with a casual, chilling grin before answering. “You wouldn't dare... There are too many people watching.” He pointed out calmly, finally drawing Anton's panicked attention to the spectators behind him.

Around them, the other debutantes had stopped dancing with their partners and were now staring at the scene in avid curiosity – watching as the two sneering Malfoys faced each other with a fierce tension that was threatening to break. The band had long stopped playing music by now and its members were now also staring at the scene in alarm and apprehension, observing the growing murmurs and whispers as the circle of onlookers began to grow in number around them

Noticing this, Jaimee's eyes widened in nervousness and she stepped forward in between the two blondes – placing a hand on both of their chests and pushing them gently away from each other.

“Okay...You know what, guys...? Why don’t we calm down for a minute here...Alright? Let’s not make a scene...This not something you want to do.” She enunciated calmly and carefully, watching her words zoom past both men’s heads as the two Malfoy cousins continued to challenge one another’s stance with utter loathing.

“You know...I’ve had it with you too, Draco. Always strutting about the place as if you owned the goddamned world...As though you’re so much better than everyone else.” Anton retorted angrily, his eyes narrowing as he stepped forward toward his cousin until they were face to face, glaring into each other’s eyes with identical leers on their faces.

Draco merely chuckled in response, ignoring Jaimee’s imploring looks and the growing crowd of observers that circled around them as he also stepped forward, looking Anton down with a self-satisfied, arrogant smirk.

“I do not strut, Anton. I merely show the world that I carry myself with pride and dignity. Unlike you... You’re pathetic. You’re a whiny little bastard who’s been nothing but second best all his life so you use your stupid charm to further protect your insecurities. And you know it.” He returned, feeling a perverse pleasure at the blazing fury and humiliation in Anton’s eyes.

“Draco—” Jaimee began but she found herself cut off when a dark-haired girl she didn’t know had rushed forward into the circle in between the two Malfoys – her eyes teary as she tried to separate them from one another, knowing she was adding a generous amount of fuel to both men’s anger at her presence.

“Draco! Anton! Please stop this! Please don’t fight anymore, you’ll get hurt! If anything it was my fault! Please don’t do this!” She begged pleadingly, crying and causing Draco to sneer at Anton as he promptly shoved the girl’s hands away from his chest in disgust.

“Listen to the slut, Anton...You’ll get hurt. I knew there were some brain cells in her pretty little head amidst all of the treachery.” Draco mocked, causing Elisa to redden at the insult and Anton to laugh harshly at his words.

Pushing past Elisa as well, he ignored the girl's presence altogether and shoved Draco again, this time causing the anger in the Slytherin's eyes to become a menacing, maniacal gray that was so dark it was almost black. "Look at her, Draco... Living proof of my greatest victory against you. Do you know how good it feels...Knowing that I can take things away from you so easily...?" He drawled, smiling sadistically when he saw Draco's form beginning to shake.

Jaimee made to walk over to him but Anton shoved past her as well, walking right up to the other blonde and looking him right in the eye. "Do you know...How much I'll enjoy...Taking Jaimee away from you too? Huh?" He asked in a low whisper, sneering when he saw unmistakable fear mingled with anger in Draco's eyes at his words.

The half-veela laughed again, shaking his head at him in mock pity. "Do you know how easy it is to make her want me...? All I have to do...Is charm her...You should have seen her awhile ago, cousin...She was all over me... Sighing...Melting in my arms. She's mine, Draco...She'll leave you like Elisa did..." He continued to whisper, chuckling as Draco was now seething red.

"Anton, stop it!"

He heard Lorraine's scream from the watching crowd but he ignored her, his gaze still lingering on the older Malfoy's form as he stepped back and gave him a challenging smirk. "Go on then, Draco...Take your wand out. Fight me...Let's show everyone out here the true colors of Lucius' perfect son... Bring out your wand!" Anton screamed at him, causing everyone to gasp in alarm.

"He won't do it, Anton. Draco, you know you're better than that." Jaimee had spoken in calm warning from behind Draco, finally drawing Anton's attention back to her in surprise.

Before Anton could answer her, Draco spoke – looking up and regaling his cousin with a calm, foreboding smile. "She's right you know...I won't bring my wand out, cousin." He drawled lazily,

unaware of how Jaimee and Lorraine's shoulders had both sagged in relief.

"Draco?" Elisa had spoken up again from behind Anton but he refused to acknowledge her existence and kept his eyes firmly on Anton's narrowed blue eyes.

"I'd actually prefer to do this the muggle way."

At Anton's confused look, neither Jaimee nor Elisa had any chance to react when Draco had suddenly surged forward and slammed his right fist right into Anton's jaw; causing the watching guests to gasp and the younger Malfoy to stumble backwards towards the floor.

"Lost your charge have you, Granger...?"

Feeling her eyes narrow in irritation, Hermione turned from Viktor's arms to find herself staring at Blaise Zabini's handsome, smirking face a couple of meters away from her. Briefly letting go of the Viktor's hand, she excused herself from her irritated date and walked over to where Blaise stood watching her by the refreshment table.

He was sipping his goblet of champagne nonchalantly in his hand, standing right the middle of a group of Ravenclaw and Slytherin debutantes who had all stopped to watch the Gryffindor girl approaching their group with unwelcoming sneers on their faces.

Once she reached him, she stopped a couple of feet in front of him and matched his smirk, crossing her arms over her chest. "Dance with me." She ordered bluntly, causing the elegant smirk to drop from his face only to be replaced by one of pure, uncharacteristic amazement – much to the sudden burst of mocking giggles from all the other debutantes around him.

Mandy Brocklehurst, in particular, flipped her shiny blond hair over her shoulder and looked Hermione up and down with narrowed eyes, a snarl of dislike on her lips. "Blaise wouldn't dance with you, Hermione...You're just a muggleborn. You're better off mingling with some of the more mediocre half-bloods and mudbloods like you than

with us.” She drawled mockingly, causing Hermione’s eyes to flash indignantly at her words.

“What nerve and audacity she has to go up here and ask a man to dance first! And a pureblooded heir like Blaise at that. Has she no shame at all...?” Daphne Greengrass, an attractive Slytherin chimed in loudly to her friends beside her, causing all of them to laugh loudly amongst themselves.

Hermione’s hands clenched tightly and she was just about to snap at them to shut up when Blaise suddenly interrupted the girls’ laughter by setting his glass of champagne back down on the refreshment table with a loud, decisive clink. They all turned to look at the Slytherin in disbelief, watching as a slow, handsome smile directed at Hermione began to spread its way across his face.

Ignoring the shock and irritated exclamations of the girls gathered around him, he grinned happily at her and walked up to her so that he was inches from her face, much to the Gryffindor’s embarrassment and Mandy’s anger.

Then, still grinning widely, he clasped Hermione’s gloved hand in his and – in front of everyone else – gingerly lifted it to his lips to give it a brief, lingering kiss.

“I knew you couldn’t resist me, Granger.”

Before any of the watching debutantes could react any further, he winked at a now blushing Hermione and offered her his arm, which she immediately took and allowed him to pull her gently away from the pouting girls to the dance floor.

Once they got there, he easily took the blushing brunette into his arms and began leading her into a very graceful waltz, causing a rush of exhilaration on Hermione’s face as she noticed how the Slytherin’s footsteps seemed so incredibly light and effortlessly graceful as he moved.

“Wow, Zabini...You’re an incredible dancer.” She commented in admiration, causing him to chuckle softly to himself as he inclined his

head briefly at her compliment. “We Zabinis, from our Italian heritage, are particularly known for being exceptionally light on our feet. We raise a family of spectacular dancers.” He told her arrogantly, causing her to roll her eyes at his tone of voice.

“Don’t flatter yourself, Zabini...Your exceptional dancing skills isn’t the reason I asked you to dance with me.” She told him flatly, causing him to nearly let go of her in surprise before turning to glare at her with an expression of deep disappointment etched into his wide, dark eyes.

“What?! Then why did you want to dance with me then?” He demanded irritably, his eyes flashing and his movements beginning to become slightly more agitated as he continued to guide them around the dance floor in synch the band’s music.

Hermione sighed and looked back towards the windows, catching a rather far glimpse of Jaimee walking towards the archery and chatting briefly with Anton Malfoy while laughing at something the blonde half-veela was obviously whispering into her ear.

“I’m worried about Harry.” She admitted softly, causing Blaise to stiffen once more in annoyance before he followed her gaze. Once he caught sight of Jaimee by the archery, Hermione spoke up again, drawing his attention back to her.

“Anton is really a jerk...But now I’m not so sure if Draco is any different. I just wanted to ask you. Is Malfoy – Draco, I mean – is he serious about her? Does he really intend to pursue an actual relationship with her? I love Harry so much, she and Ron have been like family to me. I don’t want to see hi—her get hurt.” She murmured softly, allowing Blaise to see the look of pure worry in her eyes.

At the expression of concern in her eyes, Blaise sighed and reluctantly let go of his ire at her having wanted to dance with him just for that and gave her a reassuring smirk as he answered. “Hermione, my best friend is in love with yours. That, I am sure of. As for his intentions, he intends to marry Potter but after that, I can’t be certain. I can assure you that Draco has been obsessed with Harry since first year.” He told her, causing the Gryffindor to wince in response.

“That’s just it! He’s been obsessed with her...He’s in love with her. You must realize that those two are very different from an actual sincerity about loving another person, don’t you?” She pointed out, causing Blaise to look at her in confusion.

At his expression, Hermione shook her head in disappointment and carefully tried to gather her thoughts further as he allowed her a gentle twirl in mid-dance. When she finally faced him again, she gave him a resolute, steady gaze and began to explain.

“The day Harry and I broke up two years ago...He turned to me and hugged me tighter than he ever had in the course of our relationship. He then told me...He still loved me. So much.” She began, pausing briefly to note that Blaise was listening tensely to her words before continuing.

“I didn’t know what he meant by that and frankly, I cried because I didn’t understand how he could love me so much but then wanted to break up. But then, he pulled away and looked right into my eyes. And he told me...We’re no longer in love, Hermione...And I may not love you the same way...But I still do.” She said softly, causing Blaise’s eyes to rise up in bewilderment.

“I don’t understand. What did he mean—”

“That was the day we decided to remain the best of friends and also the day our friendship strengthened more than ever despite the end of our relationship. I had learned so much from him then. I realized I loved him too.” She finished, causing Blaise to stiffen in slight jealousy but it soon disappeared into confusion once more when Hermione looked up and gave him a small smile.

“To Harry, you see... To be in love with someone is to be driven by passion and impulse alone. A person is in love when he or she merely wants to be with another because of temporal things...like looks or money, intelligence or even how good or happy that person makes them feel. To love someone, however, is to decide to love another person for all he or she is, whether through friendship or

romance.” She told him, watching a flurry of emotions – led mostly by astonishment – running across his face.

“When one loves another, it is a decision. A person doesn’t fall in love as though it was something unavoidable...He chooses to love and is willing to keep loving that person even if that person loses the looks, the fame, the wealth, the prestige... everything. He decides to love even if that person doesn’t always make him happy...” She finished, finally causing a light to appear in his eyes as he nodded, smiling at her in understanding.

“That’s...a very beautiful mindset.” He agreed softly, pausing in thought as he spun her around again and caught her easily in his arms. Biting her lip, she looked up at him and met his eyes with a worried glance once more.

“Harry and I love one another dearly as best friends...So I could only guess that she’ll only expect so much more in a real romantic relationship. I think it’s important that Malfoy learns to understand that Harry is not going to accept him just because he believes her to be his perfect girl.” She mused carefully, causing Blaise to ponder her words in silence.

Neither of them spoke for a long time after that, both of them dancing gently to the beat of the music and it was only when he spun her around once more that he finally nodded and gave her a brief nod. “Very well...I shall relay that little message to Draco, Hermione. I’m sure it will be much appreciated.” He told her, causing her to return his nod with a small, grateful smile.

When she looked as though she was going to pull away, Blaise’s eyes suddenly flashed and he tightened his hold on her, causing her to look back at him in alarm. Seeing the indignation on his face, she looked slightly confused and gave him an uncertain smile.

“Blaise, what—?”

“Hermione. I understand how much you care about Potter...But was that truly the only reason you asked me to dance with you?” He



asked her bluntly, causing her to blush and blink rapidly as she tried to find her voice to answer his question.

“Wh—What do you mean, Blaise? I—”

“Stop it, Granger. We’ve been playing this goddamn game of cat and mouse for weeks now! It’s been nothing but a dance of avoidance between the two of us and frankly, I’m getting sick of it. Have you any intentions of taking my advances toward you as serious at all?!” He suddenly snapped, causing Hermione to flush darker in surprise at his unexpected question.

“I—It was never a means to make you chase me, Blaise. Nor did I ever want you to think I was merely leading you on. I just—”

“Didn’t you?!” He snapped again, causing her to flinch at the rising tone of his voice. “Every time I make my intention clearer to you, you do nothing but brush me off. After which, you act as though nothing has happened and that I am merely another flirtatious encounter to be forgotten. Are you deliberately playing with me?” He asked her sharply, immediately causing her to gasp at the implication of his words.

“I never played you! Nor did I brush you off! But I thought I just made it clear that—”

“You talk to me all the time in order to protect Potter from being hurt. But do you even understand how humiliating and degrading it is for me to merely act as your means of information?! Do you even realize that there are things I would like to talk about other than Potter and Draco all the time? Like us, for instance! I want to talk about our possible relationship for a change!” He interrupted angrily, oblivious to the way Hermione’s eyes were beginning to blur with tears at his harsh words.

“I’ll make it as clear as possible then, Hermione. I like you...I respect you so much. You are the most intelligent, most charming and sharp-witted girl I know. I would like to formally court you this season. Can it get any clearer than that...?” He drawled snidely just as they stopped

dancing near the refreshment table again, a sneer on his face directed at the brunette's trembling figure.

Before Hermione could respond, however, a voice had spoken up behind them – drawing Blaise's attention to the tall, regal man who had approached them in the midst of their conversation.

"Is that so, Blaise...?"

Blaise immediately stiffened, his hand going to clasp tightly around Hermione's arm.

"...Would you introduce me to this lovely young lady then?" Hearing the familiar, deep voice intoned heavily with a rich, Italian accent, Blaise and Hermione both looked up to see a handsome, dark-haired man that shared Blaise's Italian features looking coldly at them from where he stood with a glass of brandy in his hand.

Paling immensely at the sight of the Zabini head, Blaise winced and pulled slightly away from Hermione and turned to the older man in acknowledgment. Hermione, unsure of what to say, just stood there and offered the man a small, uncertain smile.

The older Zabini didn't return it, however, and merely gave Blaise another cold look, raising a single eyebrow in impatience. "Well, Blaise...? Don't be rude, now. Introduce this beautiful young debutante to me properly." He ordered briskly, causing Blaise to wince once more before hastily nodding and turning to gesture to Hermione.

"Uncle Giovanni, this is Hermione Granger. Hermione...Meet my uncle, Giovanni Zabini. He's the current Zabini family head as well as the president of Zabini Trading Enterprises." He told her, his voice tight with nervousness as Giovanni's scrutinizing eyes seemed to rake Hermione's stance from head to toe.

Feeling completely like a horrible insect being put under a magnifying glass, Hermione shakily stood her ground and looked up at Giovanni with a cordial smile on her face. "It's a pleasure, Mister Zabini...I have heard so much about you from Blaise. He respects you a lot." She

greeted warmly but the man didn't return her smile and instead, turned to Blaise with a raised eyebrow.

"...Granger, Blaise...?" He asked in a drawling, scathing voice, causing Blaise to swallow the lump in his throat nervously before Giovanni turned and snapped his head back at Hermione and gave her a cold sneer. "So...Miss Granger...What ancient family house did you say you were descended from...?" He asked bluntly, immediately causing a humiliated flush to rush up into her cheeks.

"W—Well, I'm actually not a—"

"—she comes from the noble house of the Galashiel family, Uncle. They were a rather prominent family back from the time of the Peverells." Blaise suddenly interrupted, his voice cracking slightly in hesitation.

He ignored the look of unadulterated anger and insult Hermione had shot him and gave his Uncle a nervous smile. "Funny...I don't recall a pureblooded family Granger branching off from the Galashiels..." Giovanni mused suspiciously, his eyes narrowed at his nephew but Blaise gave him another shaky smile, forcing a laugh.

"The Grangers are a small, rather reserved family you see. They don't like to mingle too much in Wizarding society nowadays... Isn't that right, Hermione?" He asked pointedly, nudging the girl sharply in her ribs but Hermione simply narrowed her eyes at him, giving him a look of disbelief and disgust as though he was made of dung.

Avoiding her eyes and wanting to get out of there before his uncle could ask him another question, Blaise grabbed Hermione by the arm and gave Giovanni another nervous smile. "Well, I do believe this is Hermione's favorite song. I'll see you later, Uncle Giovanni." He excused himself hastily, not bothering to wait for the man's reaction as he dragged the Head Girl off to the very opposite corner of the dance floor.

Once they got there, Hermione instantly yanked her arm away from his grasp, raised it high up into the air and slapped him hard across the cheek. Blinking in shock at the painful stinging in his face, he

recovered himself and snapped his face back to glare at her, his eyes burning with unmistakable outrage.

“What the bloody hell was that for, Granger?! I just saved your arse back there!” He growled, grabbing her by the arm and yanking her to him but she shoved him away with surprising strength and gave him a look of loathing.

“By lying about who I AM?! What did you save me from, Zabini? From telling your Uncle the truth of my muggle roots?!” She hissed furiously at him, making to slap him again but this time Blaise caught her hand and held it tightly, successively preventing any further attempts from her to slap him.

Shaking with rage and barely controlled emotions, she forced herself to look up at him through the gathering tears of shame in her eyes. “Were you so ashamed of who I am that you had to lie about where I come from, Zabini? Huh?! So what?! I’m a muggleborn witch! Why did you have to hide that?!” She raged at him but he met her anger with his own, flinging her hand away from him in annoyance.

“Because he won’t understand, Hermione! He, like every other goddamn pureblood in this goddamn society, look down on muggleborns like you! They would never understand how much of a wonderful person you are! Do you think I wanted him to insult you like that?!” He shouted at her and at that, her eyes widened in mockery.

“So you made up those stupid lies for me instead?! Was it so hard for you to have told him the truth?! I’m not ashamed of who I am, Blaise! I could have handled myself just fine!” She retorted angrily, trying to shove him away but his strength kept him in place, adding to her frustration.

“Instead, you insulted me by making up those lies! You don’t understand me either, Blaise! You weren’t protecting me! You were protecting yourself from the humiliation! What do you honestly think of me...? Huh? Are you ashamed of me...?” She asked, her voice cracking slightly as she met his defiant gaze.

He clenched his jaw tightly, but for the life of him he could figure out what he could say to her in response nor could he think of any justifiable reason for his actions. Instead, he stared blankly at her with an unreadable gaze, meeting her teary eyes with his own guarded dark orbs.

After a long moment of silence, she spoke again, her voice soft and shaky with raw, unkempt frustration. "You asked me awhile ago if I had any intention to take your courtship seriously...Well now I can finally give you an honest answer, Zabini." She said softly, taking a step forward toward him.

His hands tightened into fists but he stood still, watching as she struggled to find the correct words to say. "I didn't explain Harry's definition of love simply for you to tell Malfoy, Blaise...More importantly, it was meant for you." She admitted softly, finally causing his eyes to widen in dismay.

"Wh—What?"

Hermione took a deep breath, steadying herself before speaking up again. "I...I can't take you seriously...Until I know why you're doing all this. It was all so sudden, Blaise. Did you honestly think I would agree to marry you when all I know at this point is that you want a woman who's both beautiful and intelligent? How do you think that makes me feel?" She asked him carefully, watching as his face darkened in agitation.

"Just awhile ago, I see you and you're in the middle of a large, adoring crowd of girls whom you all seem to be flirting with constantly. How can I even attempt to take your actions toward me seriously given your behavior? Am I just another debutante to you?" She pointed out further, causing his eyes to flash indignantly.

"That is not true! I do not flirt with other women, Hermione. If anything, I have made it clear that you're the only girl I am directing actual effort towards!" He countered easily but Hermione chose to ignore his words and continued, keeping her voice calm and steady.

“You seem to be enamored with an image of me, Blaise – my looks and my intelligence. As Harry said...I need something so much more than that.” She said softly, sighing and looking away briefly to avoid seeing the sadness in his eyes at her rejection.

“Then, teach me. I want to love you, Hermione...Teach me how.”

Hearing his words, Hermione looked back at him in a mixture of anger, disbelief and scorn on her face as she shook her head fiercely to scoff his words. “I did teach you, Zabini...Unfortunately, you failed your first exam by lying about me in front of you snotty Uncle.” She drawled mockingly, causing him to flinch in shame.

“Hermione...I’m sorry...I—”

“You don’t need a teacher. You need a goddamn spine.”

With that, shooting the disgraced Slytherin another sneer of utter loathing, she whirled on her heel and stalked off towards the very end of the Hall where a large group of people were beginning to gather, leaving Blaise staring after her and lost in his own deep thoughts.

He was distracted; however, when he heard a rather loud outburst of screams and gasps from the large crowd up ahead of him precisely where Hermione had disappeared into. Looking up, he took a tentative step towards the mess of people, stopping briefly as he began to hear loud sounds of breakage and shouting from the middle.

Briefly inspecting the commotion, he immediately concluded that something drastic was taking place when he finally caught sight of Lorraine standing nearby within the crowd of people and screaming loudly in desperation with a look of horror and panic flashing in her eyes.

Dark eyes narrowing sharply in suspicion and worry, Blaise hurriedly rushed off toward her.

“STOP IT!” Jaimee had screamed but Draco didn’t seem to hear her amidst the screams and gasps of the watching crowd. He walked forward towards Anton who was now recovering from his shock and

struggling to his feet. Clutching his jaw painfully and in disbelief, he stared at Draco with resentment flashing in his eyes – watching the Head Boy smirk tauntingly at him as though daring him to fight back.

Before Jaimee could rush forward to stop them, Anton had growled loudly and retaliated with his own punch directed towards Draco's stomach, causing the Slytherin to wince in pain and stumble backwards against the table of refreshments behind him.

Still grimacing, Draco's eyes widened as he watched Anton seized forward in an attempt to tackle him. Hearing Jaimee's warning scream, he hastily rolled to his side, causing Anton to end up tackling the refreshment table instead – spilling out its contents into a mess of liquid, food and broken glass onto the dance floor.

Around them, the crowd had begun to move away from the brawling Malfoys in panic and Jaimee had just heard Professor McGonagall's outraged screaming at them when she felt a hand wrap tightly around her from behind – preventing her from rushing forward into the fight.

Whirling around, she saw Hermione furiously shaking her head at her as she pulled Jaimee aside into safety, wincing as the raven-haired debutante began struggling against her. "Hermione, let me go! I have to stop this, this is my fault!" She hissed angrily at her but Hermione shook her head fiercely, giving Jaimee a pointed look.

"No, it wasn't Harry! If anything, it was that girl Elisa's fault for jumping right in there and making matters worse! But please, stay out of it!" She pleaded and at her tone of voice, Harry sighed and turned to watch with a wince as Draco had managed to shove Anton into the glass window behind them – causing it to shatter as the half-veela collapsed onto the rocky ground outside the castle.

"Mister Malfoy, cease this at once! You are the head boy of Hogwarts, this is unacceptable!" Professor McGonagall had shrieked angrily, rushing forward to stop them finding herself trapped within the massive crowd of guests that had gathered and followed the two Malfoys outside the castle to watch the fight.

“Draco! Anton! Stop this at once! You are humiliating the Malfoy family!”

This time the irate voice had come from Lucius Malfoy as he too found himself struggling with the crowd to make his way toward his son, his silver eyes flashing in anger and outrage. The rest of the Malfoy family, including Draco’s mother and cousins, were behind him – watching the scene with a mixture of shock and dismay.

Still held back by Hermione’s arms, Jaimee looked around to see Lorraine watching her with wide, nervous eyes nearby. Blaise was right beside her, his face pale with shock. Dragging a strangely stiffening Hermione over to them, Jaimee shoved Blaise lightly in impatience. “Zabini, what are you doing?! Get out there and stop them! Draco’s your best friend, you have to do something!” She growled but Blaise looked at her as though she was insane.

“Are you crazy, Potter? I’m not getting involved in that!” He exclaimed causing Jaimee to smack her face in exasperation before she shrugged Hermione’s arms off and looked around again, managing to catch a glimpse of Ron, as well as a group of other Gryffindor boys, nearby as well.

Wrestling her way through the crowd over to them, Jaimee grabbed Ron desperately by his collar and jostled him roughly. “Ron! You’ve got to help me stop Malfoy! He—”

“Which one?” Came the blunt reply and she glared furiously at him, smacking him upside the head. “Draco, of course! Come on, you grab Anton and I’ll—”

“Harry, no way! I don’t want to get my arse kicked too, you know! Why don’t just wait it out until they cool off, they’ve got to stop sometime.” He told her, shrugging and at his words, Jaimee growled under her breath and shoved him away, running towards Draco and Anton again and cringing when she saw them near the archery.

Anton was repeatedly shoving Draco’s head against a nearby tree while the latter was currently trying to fend him off, struggling wildly against his cousin’s grip. When he managed to free himself, he



launched himself at Anton again, causing them both to fall to the ground and pummel each other repeatedly on the grass.

Jaimee was ready to jump after them when Anton had stood up and shoved Draco roughly backwards onto a group of nearby bachelors, causing him to crash onto Philippe Winchester who caught him and promptly tried to hold him back to stop the fight.

“Draco, enough...This is embarrassi—”

Philippe never finished his sentence as Draco had growled and landed the other pureblood with a blow to the face, causing him to stumble backwards in pain and complete shock. Ignoring Philippe’s angry outburst of curse words directed at him, Draco lunged for Anton again – initiating another flurry of mindless punching.

Unfortunately, both Malfoys were thrown off balance when Philippe had inadvertently joined in and launched himself at both of them, causing all three men to crash to the ground in a tangle of limbs and curses.

“Oh Mother of Merlin!” Jaimee groaned out loud, shaking her face in disbelief as she watched the events around her as though it was a blur – everything was happening too fast and all at the same time for her to witness everything properly.

“Somebody stop them! Blaise!” Lorraine cried out, shoving Blaise forward near the fight but he turned around and gave her a warning glare. “Now Lorraine, I hardly think—”

WHAM!

He stopped abruptly when the tangle of brawling men had crashed into him from behind, causing Lorraine and Hermione to scream in alarm and jump back before they were squashed onto the floor with them. Racing behind Jaimee, they watched as Blaise finally picked himself up off the ground and wiped the dirt from his face in anger.

“Alright...That’s it. You guys are asking for it.” He growled before he launched forward, tearing the three bachelors apart and beginning to

pummel Philippe on the stomach, causing another fit of screams – as well as cheers – from the crowd of guests and students.

From that moment, it seemed that everything began to snap into action too quick for Jaimee to see as one by one, the other bachelors around them were drawn – in one way or another – into the full brawl that had broken out.

Philippe had grabbed a nearby rock and had hurled it at Blaise's head with a furious shout. Blaise had ducked and the rock ended up hitting Oswald Cunningham, who immediately reddened in fury and hurled it back before running towards Blaise and tackling him to the ground.

Nicholas Fudge had run forward and attempted to stop the fight by helping Oswald up and placating him but Oswald merely sneered at him and landed him with a punch to the nose. At this, Nicholas seemed to forget about his intentions of breaking up the fight and retaliated with a blow to Oswald's jaw, sending the other man reeling back to the ground.

Blaise attempted to crawl away from Philippe before the other man could notice anything but Philippe yanked him by his feet and, grabbed a nearby piece of wood that had come off from one of the broken tables, and began using it to whack the dark-haired Slytherin on the head.

Snarling, Blaise shoved Philippe off and stood up, attempting to walk away but that was when Oswald had jumped onto his back – repeatedly punching him on the head with a few sharp blows of his own. Recoiling in pain, Blaise careened backwards and crashed himself into Viktor Krum who immediately shoved them back in anger.

Unfortunately, Oswald didn't seem to take too kindly to having been pushed and he shot up and shoved Krum angrily in retribution which the Bulgarian seeker met with a snarl and another punch to his face. It was when Oswald had punched him back that Krum's entire hulking gang of Bulgarian Durmstrang graduates immediately jumped into the fight – seizing Blaise, Oswald and Nicholas and beginning to pummel them one by one.

Noticing the dangerous turn of events, Philippe discreetly began to crawl his way towards the crowd before the Bulgarians spotted him. Seeing Philippe crawling on his hands and knees on the ground, Ron sneered and grabbed him by his suit, attempting to throw him back out to the wolves. Unfortunately for him, Philippe had gotten a good grasp of his suit as well and both of them ended up crashing into a furious Krum, initiating another chain of mindless punching and kicks.

Seeing their younger brother getting pummeled, Fred and George Weasley had both protested loudly in outrage and jumped, albeit excitedly, into the mess – Fred jumping onto Krum's back and sending them both crashing against a table while George flung a dungbomb onto the ground, causing a cloud of odious smoke that made many of the other men back away momentarily, coughing and covering their noses in disgust.

As soon as the cloud of smoke cleared, all of the men blinked blearily to refocus their vision. When they finally saw each other situated in a circle facing one another, they growled and surged at one another in one gigantic ball of limbs on the ground, causing the watching debutantes to scream in fear and dismay.

Beside all this chaos, Anton and Draco had resumed their own private exchange of blows and punches, knocking each other into nearby tables and sending them crashing to the ground. Draco managed to knee Anton in the groin, allowing him to roll the other boy off of him as Anton recoiled in pain. Draco would have managed to get up but Anton managed to punch him angrily in his left eye, causing the Slytherin to wince and blink blearily in an attempt to reclaim his vision.

Blindly stumbling onto his feet, Draco managed to bump himself into Ron who immediately yelled at him and shoved him away in anger. This caused the Head Boy to crash his head painfully against Philippe's waiting fist. Swinging his own fist blindly in irritation, Draco managed to hit Krum on the jaw and the Bulgarian seeker retaliated by aiming his own punch at Draco. He ducked unknowingly and behind him, Anton got the full blast of it as he lurched backwards into Blaise, the both of them crashing backwards against George until all three men crashed into another table behind them.

The sight of brawling, cursing pureblooded heirs would have been hilarious if not for the alarming rate of growth it seemed to be taking as more and more men began joining into the fight for reasons they alone could perhaps comprehend. Amidst the crowd, Jaimee watched – one of her eyes bigger than the other – with an irritated, stupefied, almost comical grimace on her face.

She also noticed that the daily prophet reporters and photographers were having a field day as they snapped away with their wizarding photographs, hurriedly barking descriptions to their magical quills as they sought to record every single detail of the fight.

Only Neville seemed to be keeping a safe distance from the other bachelors as he stood near the entrance of the castle with Luna, shaking his head in absolute dismay as he watched the fight progress from where they stood. Several feet away from them, Jaimee looked up just in time to see Sirius escorting a distraught Miss Regina out of the castle onto the grounds, the both of them stopping in shock as they beheld the spectacle before them.

Murmuring a quick apology to Lorraine and Hermione – who were both still watching the scene while covering the wince of their mouths with their hands – Jaimee picked up her long skirt and raced over to her godfather, narrowly avoiding a rock that had flown over her head.

When she reached them, Sirius grabbed her immediately by the shoulders– inspecting her face for any bruises or bleeding. “What the bloody hell is happening around here? Are you okay? Are you hurt?! I’ll kill the lot of them in any one of them hit you!” He instantly growled, gripping her chin as he inspected her face but Jaimee pushed his hands away, giving Miss Regina an apologetic look before shaking her head furiously.

“I’m fine, Sirius! Where’s Dumbledore? I’m sure only he can stop this! It’s getting so out of hand, it’s ridiculous! They’re acting like brainless thugs – I don’t even know what they’re fighting about anymore! It just broke out!” She rushed out, causing Sirius to nod to her in reassurance.

“Calm down, Pronglet...We'll find him. But first, we have to look for Keira first...She's been missing since an hour ago, we've been looking all over for her.” He told her and Jaimee looked irritably confused, her gaze moving from him to Miss Regina in rushed panic.

“Who the bloody hell is Keira?!” She blurted out, causing Sirius to wince in embarrassment but Miss Regina spoke up this time, drawing Jaimee's panic-filled eyes to her worried features.

“Keira is my daughter, Jaimee...She's a little girl with red hair holding a lion stuffed toy. Please. You have to help us find her...She's only five years old and with a fight like this going on, I'm even more worried about her now.” She pleaded and at seeing the sincere anguish in the older woman's voice, Jaimee sighed and nodded.

Sirius gave her a grateful smile before turning to wince at the brawling near the lake once more. “Ooh..Why don't you ask Ron to help you with that while we look?” He asked but Jaimee shook her head before dropping it into her hands.

“I can't...The bloody idiot is in there too.” She deadpanned, causing Sirius' eyes to widen comically in surprise.

“Why is Ron fighting –?”

“Sirius! Jaimee! Please...Keira?” Miss Regina rushed out again, causing both Sirius and Harry to nod, their questions forgotten as they hurriedly followed Miss Regina through the crowd; searching for a redheaded five-year-old amongst the sea of onlookers.

When she had once again reached Lorraine and Hermione, she shook them slightly to draw their attention. “Hermione...Lorraine...Have you seen a little girl around here? She's five-years-old...Red hair?” She asked, her features creasing into a worried frown when both girls shook their heads.

“No...We haven't. Why are you looking for a little girl, Harry?” Hermione asked in confusion but Harry shook her head, giving her an apologetic glance.

“No time to explain, ‘Mione... Sorry. Would you guys run back towards the castle and fetch Dumbledore? I’m sure he’s the only one who can stop this.” She asked, wincing when she saw Lucius and some other pureblooded family heads attempting to stop the fight, only to be pushed back by accidentally by some random limb or flying piece of wood. Due to the barriers the professors had put around the area to prevent any usage of unnecessary spells during the party, none of the onlookers could do anything but watch the fight with a mixture of exasperation and anxiety.

“We’ll get right to it.” Lorraine assured her, meeting her worried gaze with her own before she grabbed Hermione’s hand and dragged the other girl off back towards the castle, both of them running as fast as they possibly could.

Jaimee watched them go for a minute before resuming her search for Keira – forcing her way through the crowd of guests, as well as ecstatic reporters with a grimace on her face.

She looked up briefly to see a glimpse of Seamus rushing into the fight with an eager grin on his face, causing her to laugh in spite of herself as she could only imagine his reason for joining the fight – any chance to being able to grope an unsuspecting bachelor. Dean seemed to be thinking the same thing as he rushed forward and dragged Seamus away by his collar back towards the castle, much to the pout on the Irish Gryffindor’s face.

Her amusement soon faded, however, when she caught sight of Draco being pummeled against his will near the very center of the brawl. A pair of Bulgarian graduates held the blonde Slytherin’s arms tightly behind him while Anton was repeatedly punching Draco’s face from just about every angle. Feeling an unexplainable fury erupt in her chest, her eyes widened when she caught sight of the blood dripping from the side of his face as well as the cut leaking blood just above his left eye.

Bastards... She thought furiously, suddenly overcome with a wave of masculine recklessness as she too, made to run forward and jump herself right into the fight when a voice behind her stopped her, causing her to whirl around in surprise.

Professor McGonagall was giving her a hard, warning glare as she shook her head pointedly at the younger Gryffindor, a scandalized expression in her eyes. “Miss Potter...Don’t you even think about jumping in there and joining that outrageous scandal!” She burst out in a disbelieving tone.

Jaimee couldn’t help herself. She snapped back, her eyes flashing furiously.

“But they’re beating each other up! I have to stop them! I can’t just stand here doing nothing like a girl—”

“That’s just it, Potter! You are a girl, now! What do I need to say for you to understand that you are no longer a man!” Professor McGonagall admonished angrily, causing Jaimee’s eyes to darken in realization and in dread.

She looked at her stern Professor for a long moment in silence, comprehending her words carefully before she looked back at the fight once more. Ron was desperately trying to break free from Philippe’s hold as the latter continued to shove his head against the tree. Blaise, on the other hand, was having trouble trying to fend off three bachelors who seemed to be enjoying triple-teaming him, taking turns punching the Italian heir on the face.

Worst of all, she saw Draco – looking completely exhausted and worn out – as he struggled in vain against the holds on his hands, the expression on his face one of pain as Anton continued to sock his stomach repeatedly with strong, harsh punches.

The words that had issued from Jaimee’s mouth were hollow as she stood there, watching with a pale, blank look on her face.

“So...I’m just supposed to stand back...and do nothing...? Because I’m a girl...?”

Professor McGonagall looked surprise at her question but recovered and nodded, her face red with anger as she and the other Professors around her tried to sort out the mess of brawling bachelors before

them while at the same time, trying to keep the photographers a good distance from the scene.

“You will behave like a proper lady, yes...And wait until we fix this mess.” She answered, a tight-lipped expression on her elderly face.

Turning around to look disbelievingly at her, Jaimee met her eyes with a cold, silent glare – her chin raised up defiantly as she spoke in a clear, scathing whisper.

“No...No, Professor...No way...”

“Oh no you don’t, Jaimee... Don’t you even think – Jaimee?! Wait! Come back here!! HARRY JAMES POTTER!”

The elderly woman screamed sharply in alarm as Harry Potter raced forward into the mess of men before her, immediately shoving herself into the brawl of limbs and legs and slamming her fist hard into as many stunned faces as she could.

“Miss Jaimee?!”

Many of the bachelors turned to look at her with an incredulous, gaping expression of shock but she met them with a sneer and a very powerful punch, effortlessly clearing a path through the heap of men surrounding her.

“That’s HARRY to all of you, bastards!” She spat out in a loud yell as she briefly aimed a blow to a particularly large bachelor holding Fred up until his feet dangled in midair while he choked him by his neck. At Jaimee’s punch, he instantly dropped the Weasley twin back onto the ground and Fred cringed with relief, looking exhausted. She met his thankful wink briefly with a nod before continuing to make her way towards Draco in the very middle of the brawl.

When she got to the center of the fight, she landed a fierce blow directly to the jaw to the bulky Durmstrang graduate holding onto Draco’s left arm, instantly causing the larger boy to stumble backwards in pain.



“Why don’t you fight fair, asshole?” She growled loudly, slamming her fist into his face again and managing to bust open his lip at the sheer strength of her punch. Recovering from his shock, Draco used his freed arm to punch Anton in the eye before he yanked his other arm free from his other captor and began fighting at full strength once more.

Beside him, Jaimee effortlessly spun one of her long legs into a fierce high kick that forced the Durmstrang graduate’s face to make painful contact with the sharp heel of her shoes, finally knocking him unconscious and causing him to collapse onto the ground.

“Hey...Maybe these high heels aren’t so bad after all...” She mused out loud, looking appreciatively down at her shoes. With that, she turned to the other graduate who was just about to shove Draco from behind as the blonde Slytherin had gone back to fighting Anton.

Catching his fist in her hand before it landed its blow, she flung it back and knocked him away with powerful uppercut on the jaw, causing him to cry out in pain and keel away from her in fear.

Momentarily, she tensed – catching a brief glimpse of a fist aiming for her from her left in the corner of her eye and in quick defense, she spun around and met it with her own fist, managing to clash her wrist together with Draco’s.

Their eyes met and Draco shot her a grateful, slightly sheepish grin which she briefly returned for a fleeting moment before they both turned sharply, ducked and met the oncoming fists of the men behind them, dodging simultaneously and punching the offending limbs away in seeming unison with the other’s movements.

When Draco ducked low to avoid a punch, Jaimee spun herself over him; landing a powerful heel kick to the man behind him and sending the other crashing to the ground. When Jaimee ducked down to avoid a kick, Draco caught the other bachelor’s foot in mid-air and used it to slam him away from them against a nearby tree.

In the back of her mind, she barely processed the furious flashing of the cameras and the excited murmuring of the reporters watching but

she couldn't care less, as she found herself more concerned with using her heels to her advantage. She aimed a particularly high, spinning kick to the bachelor behind Draco as he rounded on her, the maneuver causing her skirt to ride up slightly to expose the smooth skin of her leg to the smirking blonde Slytherin beside her.

When she finally knocked the other Durmstrang graduate unconscious as well, Jaimee turned around and raced toward her best friend, shoving Philippe off of him and leveling the pureblooded heir with a heavy punch right to the nose. Muttering his gratitude, Ron clapped her briefly on the back before he tackled Philippe once more, indicating that he would be alright.

She was just about to run forward to help Blaise when a loud scream from the watching guests made her look up, searching frantically for the source of the noise. A feeling of dread and horror rose up in her throat as she caught sight of a small, terrified looking little girl clutching a stuffed lion huddled under a small tree near the lake—the very same tree Draco and Anton were hurtling very closely towards in the midst of their resumed fighting.

Draco had growled and shoved Anton away from him, causing the half-veela to crash backwards painfully onto the tree. The little girl named Keira had screamed and moved to avoid him, managing to stumble under his legs.

“MOMMY!”

Finally seeing the little girl there, Draco immediately stopped and a look of worry creased on his face but Anton had merely growled and roughly shoved the figure entangled in his legs in annoyance. Keira cried out in fear as she was pushed back with force, hurtling dangerously close to the lake's edge.

Again, a myriad of things seemed to happen all at once.

Draco's eyes widened in fear and he raced forward, attempting to catch the little girl before she fell into the lake but Anton sneered and stuck a foot out to trip him, causing Draco to fall onto the ground

where Anton jumped over him and proceeded to punch him repeatedly.

A scream escaped from Miss Regina's lips as she raced toward her daughter in utter desperation. Just a couple of meters in front of her, Sirius was racing for dear life towards Keira as she teetered on a single foot near the edge just before the deep cold, water – her big eyes searching desperately for her mother as she clutched her stuffed lion tighter against her chest.

“MOMMY, HELP!”

Unfortunately, neither Sirius nor Miss Regina were nowhere near enough to save her and before anyone else could act any further, the five-year-old had fallen into the water with a loud splash until she was gone within the lake's murky depths – much to the terrified screaming of her mother and watching debutantes as well as Sirius' loud, furious curses.

In the middle of all this, Jaimee quickly decided to do the only thing she could do. Without so much as a second thought, she ran as fast as she could towards the freezing lake and immediately dived into the dark waters after the child, drowning out the sudden ringing of Dumbledore's furious shouting as well as the screams of ensuing panic all around them.

“Oh Merlin, Is she okay? Please let her be okay! Please!” Regina screamed as she and Sirius ran forward, pushing through the crowd just as a dripping wet, exhausted Jaimee emerged from the lake with a sobbing, shivering little girl clutching her hands tearfully around her neck.

When they reached her, Jaimee instantly gave the shivering five-year-old a comforting kiss on the forehead before she gently handed her to her distraught mother. Miss Regina immediately took her daughter and hugged her tightly to her chest, sobbing in immense relief.

After making sure that both Regina and Keira were alright, Sirius rushed forward and wrapped his tuxedo jacket around his

goddaughter's shivering body, hugging her to him in relief and gratitude. "You did well, Prongslet...You did well..." He whispered to her, rewarding her with a brief kiss on the top of her forehead.

Noticing the troubled, worried frown on her face, Sirius nudged her gently and drew her attention back to his small smile. "That waterproof make-up those booty-cians used on you were useful after all, huh?" He kidded gently in an effort to lighten her fear to which Jaimee responded to by rolling her eyes and giving him a weak, exhausted smile.

Seeing the small bruises around her daughter's arms and legs, Miss Regina looked up tearfully at Jaimee in horror. "Wh—What happened to her? Will she be okay?" She asked, her voice shaky.

Jaimee winced and walked forward towards them, wrapping Sirius' jacket tighter around her shivering body. "She'll be fine...There were Grindylows that had surrounded her in the lake. I got to her just in time before they dragged her off deeper in the waters." She admitted softly, noting the look of immense dread on Miss Regina's face as she let go of her daughter briefly and rushed over to pull Jaimee into a tight, emotional hug.

"Th—Thank you...Thank you for rescuing her, Jaimee...Thank you..." She whispered, her voice cracking with emotion before she let the Gryffindor go and gathered her trembling daughter into her arms once more. Around them, Jaimee and Sirius finally took notice of the crowd of guests that gathered to watch the dramatic scene.

All the men had long stopped fighting now and were staring at Miss Regina with varying degrees of relief, shock and shame on their faces. Most of them understood that it had been their recklessness that had almost caused harm to an innocent five-year-old.

A slightly bruised Ron, who was beside an equally battered Fred and George, gave Harry a smile which she briefly returned before she let her eyes travel behind him where Blaise was comforting a trembling, slightly struggling Hermione against his chest. Seeing Jaimee's eyes on her, Hermione gave her a tearful smile which she easily returned.

The other bachelors – Philippe, Nicholas and all the others – had backed away from the spectacle in obvious embarrassment and were now meeting the screaming tirades of their angry families as loud, furious parental shouting could be heard all around the scene.

Intermingled with the shouting was an irate Dumbledore who was now angrily waving away the watching reporters and photographers trying to gather closer around them. Assisting him were some of the other Professors – McGonagall, Sluwick and Snape included as they hurriedly tried to regain some semblance of order back into the party.

Jaimee's eyes finally widened when she met Draco's gaze a couple of meters away and she instantly felt a feeling of anger welling up inside of her at seeing his apologetic, shameful eyes looking imploring into her own. He was beside a worriedly fussing Narcissa as she wiped off the blood on her son's cheeks and forehead and treated his wounds while at the same time, berating him for such embarrassing behavior.

Her anger at Draco compared nothing, however, to the rage she felt when she saw Anton leaning against the same tree he had inadvertently shoved Keira from, a mixture of annoyance, anger and humiliation etched on his handsome face. Lorraine was beside him, trying to soothe his wounds with some ointment while Lucius Malfoy was behind her, shouting furiously at the half-veela for his reprehensible actions.

Seeing him standing there, Jaimee felt her cheeks flush with anger and her eyes narrow in disgust at his actions. He had shoved a harmless, innocent little girl into the lake without so much as a second thought. That alone made her want to beat the crap out of him as she glared at him with an intense hate and loathing in her eyes, finally realizing for the first time how despicable his personality truly was.

Seeing her new look of hatred directed towards him, Anton looked up and met her glare with an equally furious, dangerously hissing snarl – causing the anger in her face to snap quickly into alarm when she saw a fleeting change of his handsome face into that of a hideous

combination of a half-human, half cruel-beaked bird face similar to the vicious faces of the angry veela she and Ron had seen in their fourth year during the Quidditch World Cup.

Gasping softly in shock and fear, she took a step back – nearly stumbling to the ground had Sirius not reached out a hand to steady her back to her feet. She thanked him briefly before turning back to look at Anton again but then – almost as fast as she had seen it, the hideous monster face was gone and instead she found herself staring with wide eyes at Anton's strikingly handsome, composed features.

Two Face...! Her eyes widened, recalling Byron's joking words earlier on that night and how the rest of the Malfoy cousins had stiffened uncomfortably at the jest.

Good Merlin... He can take on the hostile form of a full Veela! She realized to herself in horror, hurriedly running through her mind how the physical strength and magical power a typical Veela possessed were enhanced with incredible magnitude when the beautiful creature was said to be in its equally hideous, hostile form.

Can a Half-Veela in hostile form magnify strength and magic as well...? She tried to remember in growing anxiety, watching closely and carefully as – as though he had read her thoughts – Anton glared coldly at her with an unreadable, dangerous glint in his eyes.

Looking around her, she observed that nobody else seemed to notice the change in Anton's countenance and that idly made her wonder if she was overreacting or if she had imagined the entire thing. However, as she glanced back up and met the handsome, sinister smile he gave her that didn't seem to reach his icy blue eyes; she knew she wasn't imagining things.

There was so much more to Anton Malfoy than she had originally – and quite naïvely —thought there was.

Her attention was reluctantly shifted off of him, however, when she felt a small figure wrap itself tightly around her legs. Looking down, her suspicions faded momentarily as she was rewarded with the sight

of Keira's small, uncertain smile as the little girl reached up and offered Jaimee the drenched, stuffed lion in her hands.

Smiling gently at the action, she bent down and took the offered toy – inspecting it closely before she gave the little girl a grin. “Wow... What a beautiful lion, Keira...What's his name?” She asked; unaware of the soft, affectionate gaze Draco was giving her from where he stood – no longer listening to his mother but watching the scene intently with a gently amused look in his eyes.

Keira looked shyly at her for a moment, bringing her thumb up to suck on it in nervousness. She looked questioningly up at her mother who smiled at her and gave her an encouraging nod.

“Y—You name him...Pwease, Jaimee...” She said softly, rewarding Jaimee with an adorable smile that instantly caused all the growing anger and agitation the Gryffindor felt towards everyone around them to temporarily be forgotten.

Smiling once more and holding the lion up to her eyes, she nodded decidedly before handing it back to Keira, who hugged it closely to her chest. “Alright...How about...Paddy then? Will that be okay?” Jaimee suggested, grinning when the girl's eyes lit up in agreement.

Although Sirius had reddened in embarrassment, Keira had clapped her hands gleefully and nodded, giving the older girl a huge smile. “Paddy's cute! Okay...Paddy!” She squealed out loud, causing Draco to chuckle softly in spite of himself as he watched them.

When Jaimee looked like she was about to rise back up on her feet, Keira had surged forward and wrapped her arms around the older girl in a tight, affectionate hug.

“Thank you for saving me, Jaimee...” She said out loud, causing Jaimee to stiffen slightly in uncertainty but seeing the genuine gratitude in the young girl's adorable face, she melted and slowly wrapped her own arms around the five-year-old as well.

As she hugged the girl close to her chest, Keira spoke up again – her voice sounding highly curious and inquisitive. “Jaimee...Are you a... princess...?” She asked loudly, causing Harry to blink in stupidly in surprise. Fortunately, the Gryffindor remained ignorant as to how Draco, as well as Sirius, were both stifling smirks and sniggers behind their hands.

“Uhm...Er...That’s, uh...”

Jaimee was speechless for a minute, allowing Keira to play with the silver crown of grain sheaves on her head before she felt the adorable redhead giggling to herself again.

“You’re really pretty...And you’re wearing a crown...So you must be a princess...” She concluded decidedly, oblivious to how Jaimee felt her resolve melting at the child’s innocence. Instead of answering her question, she smiled and hugged the little girl tighter, giving her a kiss on the top of her head.

They remained like that for quite some time, unaware of the chaos that was once again erupting all around them. It was in that position that Jaimee failed to notice how Dumbledore, the other teachers and the outraged families all suddenly realized the consequences of what had happened and began to snap back into action, shouting, murmuring, and cursing noisily amongst themselves in a futile attempt to sort out the mess.

The debutantes who had stood speechless and had watched the whole event in horror were now running about in a state of panic – rushing to check on their escorts or towards their families.

McGonagall was shouting furiously at a gathered crowd of the young, bruised and bloody bachelors who had participated in the fight.

“THIS IS A COMPLETE OUTRAGE! I HAVE NEVER BEFORE SEEN SUCH CALLOUS BEHAVIOR FROM A BUNCH OF EDUCATED, WELL-BRED YOUNG GENTLEMEN! THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A NIGHT FOR OUR DEBUTANTES AND OUR DEAR GUESTS AND YOU HAVE RUINED IT FOR ALL OF THEM WITH YOUR RECKLESSNESS! YOU HAVE EVEN INFLICTED DANGER ON AN



INNOCENT FIVE-YEAR-OLD CHILD WITH YOUR BEHAVIOR! I AM BESIDE MYSELF WITH ANGER!"

In particular, she was directing most of her screaming at the two Malfoys who had started the brawl in the first place – Draco and Anton. While Draco was now glaring off into space in silent anger at himself, Anton was calmly sneering at McGonagall with an eyebrow raised haughtily at the woman in growing annoyance.

"YOU HAVE DISGRACED AND DISHONORED ALL YOUR FAMILIES HERE TODAY! WHAT WILL THE NEWSPAPERS SAY ABOUT US TOMORROW?! HAVE ANY OF YOU EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR ACTIONS?! YOU SHOULD ALL BE ASHAMED OF YOURSELVES! ESPECIALLY THE BOTH OF YOU! DRACO! ANTON!"

Behind an equally angry Dumbledore, Lucius, Louis, and the rest of the Malfoy family looked on at this with humiliation clearly burning in their eyes. A swarm of esteemed pureblooded families stood right behind them waiting to unleash their wrath on the poor Hogwarts teachers– from the Winchesters, the Zabinis, as well as the Weasleys but the latter seemed more concerned about checking up on Ron, Fred, and George's condition than anything else.

Cornelius Fudge, the Minister of Magic, looked positively livid at his son's bruised condition and walked right up to Dumbledore, shouting angrily at his inability to control things.

"DUMBLEDORE! I CANNOT BELIEVE YOU WOULD LET SUCH A DISASTER HAPPEN LIKE THIS! I HAVE HALF A MIND RIGHT NOW TO CALL THE OFFICE AND REPORT THIS TO PROPER LEGAL ACTION AGAINST THESE YOUNG MEN!"

Unfortunately, this caused another eruption of similar shouting from not only the families gathered but also from the swarm of bachelors as they began defending themselves in panic.

"It wasn't me! Weasley shoved me in there!"

"Your son is an outrage and a disgrace!"

“That was after Cunningham punched me!”

“I can’t believe you and your family raised your children to be such reckless scoundrels!”

“Zabini made me do it, sir! He attacked me!”

“My family will take this to court, Dumbledore!”

“Malfoy started it! I was doing just fine before they dragged me into the fight!”

The last one who had spoken was Philippe and this directed everyone else’s attention to the two Malfoys in question, both of which winced under the glares of the furious crowd before them.

This was the scene Jaimee was met with when she looked back up, catching a glimpse of Hermione escorting a distraught Lorraine back into the castle along with the other debutantes. Around them, a number of house-elves had begun to appear to clear the mess of tables and food away while reporters continued to run around the scene with their cameras and quills.

It was an absolute chaos and disaster and Jaimee had to groan out loud as she predicted it was about to get worse when saw a furious man striding over to where she, Keira, Sirius and Miss Regina had gathered. A harsh, cold sneer was on the man’s lips.

“That was despicable, Regina! You call yourself a decent parent?! Look at what your reckless flirting and carelessness has almost done to our child! I should take her from you as soon as possible – YOU ALMOST LET HER DROWN!” Nigel Hammerstone spat angrily into her face, yanking the woman roughly up onto her feet by her arm and causing her to wince in pain.

Seeing this, Sirius’ eyes had flashed dangerously and he stood up as well but the man seemed oblivious to his presence and tightened his grip on Regina’s arm in fury. “N—Nigel! I’m sorry... I—It wasn’t my

fault! Sh—She was playing with some f—friends and I—I turned around and she—”

“Oi! HammerHEAD! You no-good, insignificant bastard; it wasn’t her fault! You’re not one to talk anyway, where were you when Keira fell into the lake?!” Sirius growled, baring his teeth at the other man as he walked over to the other man.

Jaimee watched as Nigel sneered and merely tightened his grip on Miss Regina’s arm, causing the woman to wince in pain and struggle against him.

Looking Sirius up and down in disdain, he raised an eyebrow at him – clearly indicating for him to stay away. “Get lost, Black...This doesn’t concern you. This is a family matter!” He drawled angrily and at that, Regina had raised a hand and slapped him hard on his face, causing him to reel back at the force of her onslaught.

“Family?! Since when were you ever a family to me or to your daughter, Nigel?! Since when did you ever care about what happens to anything except your goddamn money?!” She shouted at him, shoving him away from her in disgust.

Nigel growled loudly under his breath and yanked her around by her arm again before shoving her roughly onto the ground. Seeing her cry out loudly in pain as she fell, Sirius had finally growled and surged forward, slamming his fist hard against the other man’s face.

Keeling backwards, Nigel fought to regain his balance before he snarled again and lunged forward at Sirius even amidst the already present chaos that was already happening around them.

“Black, you bastard! This is for all those times you humiliated me back in school!” He raged, aiming a punch to Sirius’ jaw and watching in sadistic glee as the Marauder stumbled, clutching his jaw in pain.

Jaimee felt her anger returning full force now, fueled even more by the sound of Keira’s renewed, terrified crying in her arms and the loud, anarchy of shouting, screams and cursing of everyone else around them. It was all becoming too much for her to handle – grating on her

nerves and overwhelming her with a force that she found it difficult to breathe.

These damn people just did not know when enough was enough.

She had to do something to stop all this and she knew exactly what that was.

Righting herself back up with Keira still tightly held in her arms, she walked in between Sirius and Nigel, causing both men to stop and momentarily blink in confusion at her.

Then, taking a deep, sound breath, she opened her mouth and shouted louder than she had ever shouted in her life.

**“OI! ALL YOU STUPID, BRAINLESS, PUREBLOODED BASTARDS! LOOK AT ME!”**

At once, all the noise and chaos fell into a shocked, unsteady silence before one by one; she was met with the angry eyes and stares of all the people around her – from Dumbledore, her teachers, the Malfoys, the Minister, Sirius, Nigel, Ron, Anton, Blaise and finally, Draco’s silent, penetrating gaze.

Once everyone was silent and she was sure she had all their attention, she set Keira back down gently back onto the grass, allowing the little girl to run to her mother before she looked back up and walked right into the middle of the field.

The look of blazing anger on her face, they all recalled, had only been seen once before – in the climax of the final battle with Voldemort when she had surged forward and had fought with all her strength for the freedom of the wizarding world. Now she had that same stance and look in her eyes as she walked up to them, her chin held high and her form radiating with fury.

**“I KNOW...MORE THAN ANYTHING NOW...THAT THIS WHOLE STUPID FIGHT IS PARTIALLY – OR PERHAPS INDIRECTLY – MY FAULT. IF I HADN’T CREATED SO MUCH OF A MESS BY ALLOWING MYSELF TO BE A DAMNED DEBUTANTE IN THE**

FIRST PLACE, NONE OF THIS WOULD HAVE HAPPENED.” She began carefully, speaking in a loud and clear voice to be understood.

Draco watched her intently, a pang of guilt in his chest when he noticed that she was actually taking the blame for all of them – taking the blame of something that had happened that was not really her fault or responsibility to begin with.

She cleared her throat and spoke again, this time addressing her words to the crowd of gaping bachelors watching her.

“SO I’LL MAKE THIS SIMPLER AND EASIER FOR ALL OF US. FROM THIS MOMENT ON...I WILL TAKE NO MORE DATES FOR COURTSHIP OR ARRANGEMENTS TO MEET SUITORS. NOR WILL I JOIN ANY MORE OF THESE RIDICULOUS SOCIAL EVENTS TO PROMOTE MYSELF AS A DEBUTANTE.” She continued, much to the distress of the bachelors as they began to murmur loudly again but she continued to speak before the noise could progress further.

“SHUT UP BASTARDS!! NOW...INSTEAD...FROM THIS MOMENT ON... WE’LL DO THIS MY WAY! IF ANY OF YOU ARE THAT DESPERATE TO COURT ME...CHALLENGE ME TO A FIGHT! I WILL AGREE TO MARRY THE FIRST MAN WHO MANAGES TO BEST ME FAIRLY IN A MAGICAL COMBAT. WHOEVER HE MAY BE, I WILL MARRY HIM...AS LONG AS HE SATISFIES THAT ONE CONDITION ALONE!” She announced loudly and carefully, causing a round of gasps and widening of eyes at her words.

Draco’s own eyes widened as he watched her, instantly feeling a twinge of fear at the thought of another man winning her over by the purely objective conditions she set upon herself. He failed to see the triumphant gleaming in Anton’s eyes or the sneer on his face upon hearing Jaimee’s words.

“SO GIVEN THAT, I’M SURE YOU ALL REALIZE...THAT THERE IS NO MORE NEED TO COMPETE AGAINST ONE ANOTHER IN OPEN HOSTILITY. YOUR OPPONENT WILL BE ME AND ME ALONE. THERE IS NO MORE NEED FOR ALL THIS COMPETITION BECAUSE QUITE FRANKLY, IT’S RIDICULOUS!

YOU ALL PUT THE LIFE OF A LITTLE GIRL IN DANGER! AND I WONT PUT UP WITH IT ANYMORE!" She finished, looking completely exhausted and close to tears as she tried to compose herself.

When the crowd continued to look at her in disbelieving, stunned silence and the ministry reporters continually wrote down what she was saying, she looked right into Draco's eyes and saw the look of pure shame and apology in them directed towards her.

She met this with a blank, emotionless stare and it was only when Sirius had shaken himself out of his shock long enough to place a comforting hand on her shoulder that Jaimee was jolted into action. She angrily shrugged Sirius' hand off her before whirling around and storming back towards the castle, desperate to hide the tears that were beginning to pool in her eyes and leaving a trail of silence from the stunned onlookers staring after her.

"HARRY!"

Draco immediately broke away from the crowd and his family and tore after her, oblivious to how everyone was once again murmuring loudly amongst themselves in another state of uproar and how Dumbledore was now shouting exasperatingly to calm them back down.

Sirius looked as though he was about to run after Jaimee as well but Regina placed a gentle hand on his shoulder, keeping him in place. When he met her soft, knowing look with a confused glare, she simply shook her head at him and gave him a reassuring, comforting smile.

"This is something a girl needs to deal with on her own, Sirius..."

"HARRY!"

Jaimee continued to run as fast as she could down the halls, shoving past shocked debutantes and ignoring Hermione's shouts of concern at her as she desperately focused on trying to outrun the blonde Slytherin chasing after her.

As soon as she exited the Great Hall, she ran down the hallway and turned sharply at a narrow corner, crying out loud in pain when she had tripped on her heels again and slammed herself painfully into a suit of armor.

Before Draco could catch up to her, she reached down and angrily yanked the shoes off her feet, hurling them to the floor. After that, she immediately pulled herself back up and raced past Draco the minute he had rounded the corner in time to see her.

“HARRY, PLEASE WAIT!”

“GO AWAY, MALFOY!” She screamed angrily at him before she rounded another corner and found herself running towards the Hogwarts gardens, wincing as her bare feet began to step onto the sharp tiny pebbles on the ground.

When she managed to reach the grassy dead-end in the middle of the garden, she whirled around and angrily yanked her wand from her where she kept it attached to her thigh under her skirt, pointing it threateningly at Draco with an angry, murderous flashing in her teary green eyes.

He stopped several feet away from her, raising his hands up in surrender to indicate that he wasn't holding his wand and looking at her calmly in an effort to placate her wild anger.

“WHY DID YOU FOLLOW ME, MALFOY?! DO YOU WANT TO CHALLENGE ME TO A FIGHT ALREADY?! F—FINE! B—BUT I'M WARNING YOU! I—I'LL KICK YOUR ARSE TOO! J—JUST G-GIVE ME A SECOND T—TO R—REST!” She attempted to shout at him, her voice growing hoarse and weak as she stood with her shoulders heaving for breath, the wand outstretched in her hand shaking slightly in exhaustion.

Draco simply watched her in silence, his hand going to the pocket in his tuxedo as he made to pulled out his own wand. Seeing this, Jaimee instantly stiffened in suspicion again and snapped her wand up higher at him.

“I—I SAID, GIVE ME A SECOND MALFOY! MERLIN, AT LEAST GIVE ME THE DECENCY OF A FAIR FIGHT! I—I—”

She stopped, her voice breaking and fading when Draco had gingerly tossed his wand into the ground a few feet away from him. Seeing her blinking at him, he held his hands up once more – indicating to her that he meant her neither harm nor challenge.

“M—Malfoy...Wh—What—?” She managed weakly in a softer voice, the wand she pointed at his chest lowering slightly.

Draco stepped forward and gently pushed her pointed wand aside. Placing both hands on the sides of her teary face, he leaned forward and daringly claimed her lips in a hungry, passionate kiss. She froze for a split second, her eyes wide before they instantly closed and the wand in her hand fell listlessly to the ground. Wrapping her arms around him, she clung to him tightly, her body weakening and melting against him in surrender.

When Draco’s hands traveled down to grip her tightly around her waist, she moaned loudly and opened her mouth to the fiery, dominating onslaught of his skilled tongue. She was only vaguely aware that she was being pushed backward and she only realized it fully when her bare back met the cold wall of the dead-end behind them, allowing the Slytherin leverage as he pressed himself tighter onto her shivering body.

Gasping for breath, his lips broke away and moved down to suck and kiss hungrily at her neck while his hands moved downward, tightly squeezing her rounded bottom and yanking her hips roughly to meet the sharp thrust of his. At the sensual friction, her eyes wrenched shut in pleasure and she impatiently tilted her chin to meet his lips again, this time allowing her to assault the delicious cavern of his mouth with the same force of dominance he had used with hers.

He thrust their hips together once more, recreating the same delicious sensation and causing her to break away from their kiss to gasp out loud as she felt the heated pressure of his hard arousal pressing against her thigh. An animalistic growl of lust escaped his



lips and his hands began to travel upwards, slipping into the damp, silk fabric of her gown and possessively cupping her bare breast, causing her to arch achingly against him in desire.

Her hands slipped beneath his undershirt, climbing up his warm back until her nails began digging sharply into the soft, flushed skin, causing Draco to hiss in pleasure. Another feral growl erupted from his throat just before he leaned down and began kissing, sucking and licking at her breast. Jaimee moaned loudly this time, unknowingly adding to his arousal as he bucked his hips violently once more against hers, causing her to wince in pain as her back met the wall's rough surface.

At his silent prompting to wrap her legs around his waist, she instantly obliged – supporting herself by clinging tightly onto his neck. He positioned them quickly so that he had trapped her with the force of his body, pressing her tightly against the wall for added leverage and supporting her bottom with his hands.

From there, he continued to do unspeakable things to her breasts with renewed intensity, teasing her relentlessly with his tongue while his hips continued to thrust against hers, igniting again and again that wonderful, sexual friction that drugged their minds with mindless lust and passion and the aching moans escaping from her that enflamed his maddening hunger.

Leaning back down, she kissed him again until their tongues were dueling with each other and she impatiently began to undo the buttons of his undershirt, allowing her eager hands to roam and caress the lean, firm muscles of his bare chest. He hissed at her touch once more, his eyes clamping shut as Jaimee broke the kiss and began kissing and nipping a trail along the creamy, exposed skin.

When she bit down hard onto the curve of his shoulder just below his neck, he thrust his hips more forcefully against her– this time causing her to wince and scream in a mixture of pleasure, pain, and angry lust when his impressive strength had slammed her too violently against the wall.

It was undoubtedly the most erotic sound Draco had ever heard in his life and unfortunately, it did nothing to soothe his lust. His treacherous body was already telling him – screaming viciously at him to take advantage of the moment and claim her as his but his rationale was desperately shouting otherwise, fighting its way through his hazy, unkempt senses.

He clenched his eyes shut, trying to get a better hold over his actions. Everything about her – the beautiful sounds of pain and pleasure she was making, her scent, her taste, her goddamn body – was drugging him into a mindless desperation to take her roughly right then and there but somewhere in the back of his head, Draco knew that if he didn't stop them now – they would end up doing something that Jaimee would most likely regret and hate him for once it was over.

Biting hard on his lower lip as he concentrated on regaining effortful control over his thoroughly aroused body, he forced himself to still. Clenching his eyes shut briefly in excruciating agony before opening them again, he calmed the confused, disappointed look on her face by giving her a kiss on her scar.

“D—Draco...Wh—What—?”

He set her down slowly back onto her feet, his hands shaking as he adjusted her gown so that she was fully covered. Taking a deep breath, he pulled Sirius' now damp jacket off her to replace it with his own dry one and silenced her queries by putting a finger gently to her lips.

She blinked at him in disbelief, her lips a ravished red from his kisses and her cheeks still flushed with lust. Draco groaned silently to himself and he almost kissed her again but instead, he pulled her close against him in a gentle embrace, allowing her to feel the trembling of his heated body.

“I thought... This was what you wanted from me, Malfoy...”

At the sarcastic mockery in her words, Draco flinched slightly in insult before his hands tightened around her tense form. Taking a deep

breath, he forced himself to speak in a clear, assertive voice that rang clearly in her ears.

"I don't want a one night stand with you, Harry. I want you for the rest of my life."

She glared at him in silence, raising a single, challenging eyebrow and sneering at his words but he forced himself to continue.

"The night I take your body as mine is the night you have taken my name as yours as well...Along with everything I am and everything I have to offer. I want to do this properly. I want to take you on our wedding night. Not here...Not like this." He whispered softly, his fingers caressing her hair as he planted a soothing kiss on her shoulder.

In spite of what she had said, Jaimee felt her heart melting at the tender possessiveness she heard in his words, knowing now more than ever that she had finally done the unthinkable.

She loved him. The one person she hated all her life and the one person who was responsible for making her a woman in the first place and putting her through all this mess.

"What game are you playing, Draco...?"

Her voice had been soft and whispered but he heard every word. He pulled back from her and met her gaze with a steady one of his own. "I already told you. I want nothing but to win you over, Harry...I am deeply, madly, passionately in love with you. And I want you so goddamn much ..." He answered, watching the conflicted emotions running across her face.

Harry's eyes darkened at his words and her voice became cynical.

"You want me?"

Feeling a twinge of impatience at her reaction, Draco repeated himself and enunciated each word with growing force and conviction.

“Did you hear what I said, Potter?! I am in love with you!”

His shout seemed to drown her ears and she felt as though a hand had reached up from her stomach and squeezed her heart painfully, making it difficult for her to breathe. More than anything she wanted to believe him. But those weren't the words she wanted to hear.

She knew that and as he sighed in exasperation and pulled her tightly against him again, she found herself pushing him gently away and looking deeply into his eyes as she searched for something Draco couldn't quite comprehend.

“I'm sorry, Draco...You've said that before. And I get it. You don't have to keep repeating yourself. You're in love with me...But...That's...not enough.” She whispered, looking sadly at him as he gave her a look with a mixture of anger, confusion and frustration all at once.

“Wh—What?!” He asked loudly, his voice rising to a shout that echoed in the silence around them and made her wince.

“What do you want me to say, Potter? What more do you want from me?! Have I not made my intentions clear enough?! I am in love with you! I want to marry you! I respect you enough not to do it with you against a wall in a dark, public garden! What more do you BLOODY want?! The WORLD?!” He had spat the last word out with a force that stunned her and she looked at him, seeing the undecipherable look of pain and anger in his eyes.

Blinking at the sudden rage he directed her, she returned it with a soft, conflicted sigh. She turned away from him and shook her head sadly. “I want something much more valuable than that, Draco.” She replied firmly, looking back up at him and matching his look with a calm gaze.

Draco's eyes exploded in anger at her ambiguity and he finally gave her a callous, derisive sneer, reminding her briefly of the bitter animosity that they shared for seven years. He stepped forward, yanking her toward him until she was inches away from his face.

“WHAT DO YOU BLOODY WANT ME TO SAY, POTTER?!”

I want you to LOVE me, DAMMIT! Don't tell me that you're IN LOVE with me! Tell me YOU LOVE ME! She mentally screamed at him, meeting the anger in his blazing eyes with an indignant fury equal to his that was betrayed slightly by the involuntary trembling of her lips.

Unfortunately, no man could ever read what was in a woman's eyes and all Draco found himself able to do was to glare right back and smirk harshly and challengingly at the fluctuating emotions etched onto her face, waiting impatiently for her to answer him.

Instead, she managed a smirk of her own and placed her hands against his bare chest that was still exposed from his open undershirt, shoving him away from her in disgust.

"You – along with every single goddamn pureblooded arsehole I have met this season – see me as nothing but a trophy, Malfoy! I am not a prize to be won! There are dozens of men in this castle right now who would proclaim the same feeling of BEING IN LOVE with me – my looks, my blood, my titles, my bloody body! I don't need another one." She shouted furiously at him, the harsh smirk still on her face as she began to back away from him in anger.

Draco watched silently as her firm resolve seemed to break in that instant and her resolute expression of masculine indifference dissolved into one of feminine hurting, her hand going to clasp tightly against her chest.

"That's why...I'm doing this. If you all see me as a prize...Then I will beat EACH and EVERY one of you and prove to everyone that I can NEVER be won! You'll have to approach me like everyone else! Fight me." She forced out coldly, looking away and hating the crestfallen look in Draco's eyes at her words.

"I'll show you all that I am nobody's trophy that can be won over...I'll kick all your arses to the hell I sent Voldemort to." She drawled mockingly, a harsh – almost sadistic amusement – in her eyes that reminded Draco all too much of the angry, jaded boy she had once been when the dark lord was still alive.

“Why am I even telling you all this...? What’s wrong with me...Why do I feel this much?! What am I even doing here?!” She suddenly realized, shaking her head more furiously when she heard her own voice cracking.

Before she could run off again, Draco had reached forward and kept her in place by clasping her wrist and spinning her around to look at him, allowing her to see the anger in his face transforming into assurance.

He looked at her intently, his eyes surprisingly soothing and composed as they probed into hers.

“I know you’re conflicted with all your new feminine emotions, Harry. As a man, I can never hope to understand even half of what you must feel...And I know there’s nothing I can say right now to help you sort them out...Or to make you accept my intentions.” He observed softly, causing her eyes to widen at his words.

Seeing the complete sincerity on his handsome face for the first time, her own eyes eventually cleared and softened. She stood her ground, however, the look on her face becoming more composed and certain as she stared at him, waiting for his answer to her challenge before anything else.

Draco’s eyes eventually sharpened and among the silver depths, Jaimee saw a firm, resolute determination beginning to light up, matching the decisive tightening of his jaw. Then, taking her hand and giving it a firm squeeze, he gave her a calm, resigned nod.

“So very well. I will accept your conditions. When the time is right...And you are ready...I shall challenge you, Harry. And I will beat you. And I will make you mine.” He said softly, watching as Harry daringly met his nod with a firmly resolute – otherwise shaky – one of her own before she closed her eyes and willed herself not to weaken as another onslaught of strong, aching feelings for him began surging into her chest.

Just as she was about to turn away and walk back towards the castle, the hand Draco had around hers tightened again, causing her look

back at him in confusion. They stared at each other in another long, awkward silence, studying one another's countenance as though they were suddenly strangers separated from each other by a gaping wall.

Then...Surprisingly, he slowly gave her a small smile, his eyes glazing over and trailing up over her to look up at the beautiful array of stars clearly visible above their heads. Following his gaze, she looked up as well, her heart squeezing painfully again but she couldn't prevent the small, weak smile that had forced its way onto her face.

"Promise me one thing, Harry..."

When she looked back at him with silence, he began to speak. "Promise me that despite the words we said to each other tonight...You'll give me that one date you agreed to that night in the Astronomy tower. Promise me that you'll give me that one last chance to prove to myself...And to understand what it is you want me to give you. You decide when...It doesn't matter to me. As long as you give me that chance." He said and at his reminder, she bit her lip in uncertainty.

Then, after a long moment of berating herself for having made such a promise, she nodded curtly, turning her head away so she could look at the ground. When she glanced back up to look at him, he had walked forward and was mere inches away from her.

He raised a hand and caressed her cheek, using his other hand to clasp hers tightly within his strong fingers. "I will fight you, Harry... But tonight...Let's...Pretend everything's all right...Let's forget about fighting...Forget about what happened at the ball...Forget about what you and I said. Forget about everything but us...Right here. Right now. Just...stay with me. Just for tonight...Please." He whispered achingly into her ear, guiding her hand up to his lips and kissing her fingers.

She met his gaze for a long, agonizing moment – watching as a flurry of emotions ran across the silver orbs –from fear, to regret, passion until humility. The same humility she had seen in him when he had been staring at her earlier that night as he entered the Great Hall.

She sighed and eventually allowed herself to smile faintly back at him, causing a shadow of hope to emerge in his eyes.

“Alright...I won’t kick your arse tonight, Malfoy.”

At her words, a small but genuine smile broke out on his face which Jaimee couldn’t help returning when she saw the dimple she loved so much and the glimmer of happiness in his eyes.

They would have said more but both of them exclaimed loudly in surprise when the garden sprinklers around them had magically activated, causing a generous shower of clear droplets of cold water to start spraying onto their clothes and faces.

An awkward, uncertain moment of silence passed between the two of them before Draco finally spoke, drawing her gaze to his sardonic smirk.

“Well...Er...That certainly killed the moment...”

Hearing his deadpan voice and seeing the heavy amusement in his eyes as he desperately tried to shield his face from the spraying water, Jaimee couldn’t help herself.

She started laughing. And she couldn’t stop.

Instead, she submitted herself to the pure, helpless mirth and happiness she felt with him at that very moment, wiping the water off of her own damp face, collapsing onto the soft grass until finally burying her face into her hands.

She didn’t want to think about anything else. All she knew was that she wanted to be there. And for tonight, that was all that mattered.

Easily joining her laughter, Draco gently lay himself down on the grass beside her and pulled the giggling girl into his arms. His laughter was bittersweet – he knew it was short-lived and would most probably end the minute the night was over. But he didn’t care.



When their laughter had grown uncontrollable and they were both beside themselves with their hilarity, he pulled her hands away from her flushed face and pressed their lips together in a sweet, chaste kiss – their bodies spread out contentedly on the grass underneath the ongoing shower of water all around them.

It was the first time in his life that Draco had ever kissed anyone while he was laughing.

A/N: There you go! I couldn't decide whether to make this scene fluffy, dramatic or hot... So I settled for a little of all three instead. Haha! I hope you all liked it. I'll have you all know, I was dodging homework for this just so I could get the plot out of my head before it escaped! Weeee! We're finally at the main thrust of the story! :cheers loudly:

Oh! And Jaimee finally realizes Anton's a scheming scumbag! :cheers again: Cheers for all! Haha. Sorry, I'm a bit hyper at the moment... I'm a little elated over this scene. Sigh! For those of you who are confused about the difference between falling in love and LOVING a person, I'll be explaining it more later on. But if you're REALLY conflicted and you REALLY want an explanation, PM me and I'll be happy to explain it to you. When I learned it, it helped me develop a better take on my relationships.

Anyway! Now that I've worked so hard to give you this chapter, PLEASE PLEASE REVIEW! I honestly love all your reviews and they help me so much in writing the story and making it better every chapter! I read each and every single one of them and I especially love reviews that share their thoughts about the story. So please tell me what you think! Mwah!

Next Chapter: Post-Ball Hangovers and Consequences

## Chapter 20 – Turning the Tables

“What in Merlin’s good name were the two of you thinking!?”

Draco winced as he looked up into his proud father’s irate face. His father’s mercury eyes were blazing with anger as he looked down at Draco and Anton’s tense forms with a raging fury that kept both teenagers planted firmly in their seats.

Both blondes refused to answer Lucius’ question and the Malfoy head gritted his teeth, trying to keep a firm control over his anger. He paced the length of the room and considered the right words to say. Louis Malfoy was seated on one of the nearby chairs near Lucius’ desk, eyeing both teenagers with a cool, reprimanding glare.

Near the entrance of the Lucius’ large office stood Narcissa and Lizette Malfoy, both of which were watching their husbands berating their sons with anxious expressions on their elegant faces. Just behind them, Draco caught of a glimpse of his other cousins – Lorraine, Byron, William and Reggie – all of which were peering into the room and wincing as they watched Lucius’ anger.

As an effort to appease the pureblooded families who had been highly offended following the events of the debutante ball, Dumbledore had allowed for some of the male heirs involved to return home briefly for one afternoon so as to arrange matters regarding gossip control and other related consequences with their families.

Draco hated the headmaster immensely for that decision.

He would have been happy to escape his family’s wrath.

Instead, the very morning after the debutante ball, his father had swooped down upon him in the middle of breakfast in the Great Hall and dragged both him and Anton by their ears back to Malfoy Manor in a fit of muttered cursing and seething anger.

The public humiliation had been more than unbearable.

Lucius barely managed to bark out the necessary instructions of alerting the rest of the inner Malfoy family – those related by direct descent – to a distraught Narcissa before he shoved both boys into the nearby fireplace in the headmaster's office, transporting them to Lucius' study.

It was about a good hour after that Draco and Anton now found themselves still sitting silently in the same room and trying in vain to ignore the other's presence while at the same time avoiding Lucius' condescending glaring and spiteful lecture.

Slamming his fist into the table, Lucius took a deep breath to calm himself for a moment before turning around to address the other family members huddled near the entrance of his office.

"All of you, come in here! What I have to say concerns not just Draco and Anton but the entire Malfoy family. I believe it is about time we have another inner family convening. The rest of the entire family will also hear of this but for now, it is just us. To the conference room...Now!" He drawled impatiently, the anger clearly restrained in his voice.

Draco stood up slowly, keeping his face blank with anticipation as he followed his mother, cousins and the rest of his relatives into the large hidden room at the very back of his father's study where they would occasionally gather to discuss familial issues.

Now, however, it was going to be a place to hold his trial.

Beside him, Anton merely rolled his eyes and impatiently shrugged the arm his mother had encouragingly wrapped around his shoulders before he sat down beside her, turning briefly to give Draco a taunting sneer.

Before Draco could react with a sneer of his own, Byron took the seat beside him and patted him consolingly on the back. Narcissa took the seat to his right, giving her son's hand a comforting squeeze before turning to glance worriedly at her husband.

“Your father is just a little upset, sweetheart... I’m sure everything will be fine.” She assured him in a soothing tone, reaching over to fix several strands of his blonde hair. Draco fought the urge to roll his eyes at her fussing but he let her anyway, knowing it would calm his mother down.

Giving the Malfoy heir a reckless, teasing grin, Byron leaned over to whisper something in his ear. “Don’t worry about it...I get these punishments all the time for different variations of disgracing the family name. I’m sure Uncle Lucius will go easy on you since you’re his ‘model’ son.” He told him but at his words, Draco’s eyes narrowed further and growled at the other boy in irritation, causing the metamorphagus to shrug to himself.

“Just trying to cheer you up, big D.” Byron offered, still grinning as Lorraine daintily took the seat beside him right next to her mother. After a couple more minutes, Draco watched silently as the rest of his family – including his aunts and uncles, all of which were Byron, Reggie, and William’s parents – settled down around the large rectangular table.

At Lucius’ request, the rest of the direct Malfoy family arrived by floo within a couple more minutes through the fireplace at the end of the room– Alexandra, Nadine, and Elaine with their pureblooded husbands Markus Princeton, Richard Townsend and Quentin Palamore respectively. Following them were Draco’s grandparents – Lawrence and Genevieve Malfoy.

The Slytherin nodded briefly in respect at his grandparents and while Genevieve smiled warmly back at him, Lawrence Malfoy gave him a harsh, disapproving sneer. Draco hid a wince again at his proud grandfather’s silent reprimand and fought the inelegant urge to bury his humiliated face into his hands.

As they waited a couple tense, silent moments for the family to settle down, Draco lazily let his eyes wander around the table. He allowed a small smirk when he caught sight of Alexandra’s adorable three-year-old blonde daughter, Cherry-Lynn Malfoy, looking directly at him with a bright, toothy smile.

Well at least someone in this family isn't looking at me with disappointment or anger. He thought wryly, watching as beside him, Byron began making interesting faces at the toddler by morphing his ears and nose, causing the little girl to giggle and clap her hands happily in amusement.

Draco didn't have any more time to observe further, however, as Lucius finally sat himself down at the very head of the table in silence, immediately causing a hushed silence to fall upon the entire family as they awaited his words.

He seemed to pause for a long moment to gather his thoughts before he finally looked up, directing his steely eyes at Draco first. The younger Malfoy inwardly winced again, straining to keep a neutral expression on his face in the presence of his relatives.

"We have a lot of damage control to be done here." Lucius began in a slow drawl, his voice soft and elegantly spoken but otherwise dripping with enough anger and authority to easily hold the attention of his entire family.

At his words, Louis Malfoy spoke up immediately, turning scathing eyes to Draco's silent form. "Of course we do, Lucius! Your son has disgraced our family name by attacking mine! In public, no less! It is an outrage, I demand that his claim as the family heir be thought through!" The other Malfoy hissed and at that, both Draco and Lucius' eyes flashed threateningly at him.

"As much as you are my elder, Uncle Louis...As the future head of this family, I cannot allow you to speak of me that way." Draco growled in a low voice, his eyes narrowing dangerously at the older man. Louis returned his glare with one of his own, only to be met with Narcissa's withering eyes.

"Don't you dare disrespect my father, Draco..." Anton spoke lazily, turning to glare at the Malfoy heir in threat. Matching the coldness of his smile, Draco returned it with a harsh sneer before turning back to look at his Uncle Louis in vicious contempt.

“How dare you accuse my Draco of what has happened?! He has always been the perfect son until now! If anything, it was your reckless half-breed that brought about this entire mess in the first place! If he simply ceased to meddle in my son’s courtship pursuits, then—”

“Did you just call my son a ‘alf-breed, Cissa?!” Lizette, Anton’s veela mother, had suddenly snapped in a thick French accent, breaking Narcissa’s angry tirade and turning blazing violet eyes toward the blonde woman. Narcissa met her icy glare with one of her own, only backing away slightly when the female veela’s face had taken on its hideous hostile form in defense of her offspring.

“Ugh...You are hideous, Lizette.” Narcissa drawled in disgust, smirking spitefully at the other woman and Lizette would have lunged towards her had Lucius not banged his fist violently against the table, causing everyone to wince and turn their attention back to him.

“You will not lay a single finger on my wife, Lizette.” He threatened ominously, angry eyes narrowing in contempt at the female veela.

“But she ‘as insulted my son—”

“Enough! I will not have any more of this embarrassment within my family! You are all acting like a couple of petty commoners! This has got to stop! Now...Before we discuss damage control of our reputation, I want to hear exactly what happened to have escalated such a mess. Draco?!” Lucius snapped harshly, drawing his son’s attention.

“...Father?”

“I ask you again. What, in Merlin’s name, prompted you to display such open hostility like that toward your cousin in view of so many people? You are the most intelligent of your cousins...I am ashamed of your actions.” He began, causing Draco’s face to flame in indignation.

“Father, it wasn’t my fault. Anton had broken so many rules of courtship already this entire season and I could no longer stand for it. It was an issue of masculine respect—”

“You took Jaimee away from me when she was supposed to be with me!” Anton interrupted Draco’s calm explanation, growling at him and slamming his fist angrily into the table.

Draco flashed him another arrogant, taunting sneer. “You make it sound as if I took her against her wishes. She willingly came with me, if you must know. We were doing fine until you showed up and began harassing her with your disgusting little veela charm—”

“You’re just jealous that she was going to go with me and leave you! You’re so pathetic that you can’t even handle a little competition can you?” Anton interrupted again, causing Draco to grit his teeth in growing frustration at having been cut off once more.

“Will you stop interrupting me?!”

“Will you stop trying to blame this one on me?!”

“It is your fault! You’re nothing but a pathetic loser who wants everything he can never have! Why can’t you just accept the fact that Jaimee is mine and that I will always be better than you, no matter what you do?!” Draco taunted smugly, smirking wider when he saw Anton’s face redden in outrage and embarrassment, alternating its form from his usual handsome features to that of his hideous hostile form.

At the sight of his ugly, half-human, half cruel-beaked bird face, Cherry-Lyn immediately burst out crying and buried her face into her mother’s arms. Alexandra glared angrily at Anton but the veela paid her no attention, keeping his angry eyes trained on Draco’s smirking face.

“See? Even Cherry-Lyn thinks that you’re hideous! You scared the little girl – just like you pushed that defenseless five-year-old into the lake. You’re nothing but a sad little sleaze who hides behind that stupid charm in order to get laid! Try showing that real face of yours

to women and see if you'll get the same reaction!" Draco mocked further, leering and laughing snidely to himself.

"How DARE you, you petty swine?! I will not sit and watch you mock my son and my 'eritage like zat!" Lizette suddenly shrieked, morphing into hostile form once more and standing up to stride over to the sneering Malfoy heir but at this point, Narcissa had also stood up and was now pointing her wand threateningly into the other woman's face.

"Take another step toward my son, Lizette, and I swear to you, your face will become even more hideous than it is now." She growled darkly, her beautiful features twisted into a snarl as she met the female veela's blazing glare.

"Narcissa! Lizette! Please calm down. We are not making matters better for Draco or Anton by fighting as well." Genevieve spoke up softly from where she sat but before her words could have sunk in, Claudius Malfoy— Byron's father and one of the most influential political and economic leaders in France— added further to the hostilities by voicing out his own thoughts.

"I, for one, agree with Draco. I believe Anton has repeatedly overstepped his boundaries and needs to learn a few lessons in respect and honor. He has done nothing but incite horrible scandals in the society gossip columns for years now! That has got to stop." He added calmly, much to Anton's ire and both Louis and Lizette's humiliation.

"Indeed...We have had to pull several connections more than a couple of times just to clear the mess he makes within pureblood society. It's just about time we put a stop to that rubbish tarnishing our family name." Sebastian Malfoy – Nadine and Reggie's father and a recognized member of the Wizarding England's parliament – agreed, causing Draco to sneer wider and Anton to sputter in disbelief.

"Let's not forget of course that it was just last year that he was recently accused of fathering the child of a young notorious courtesan he met in Italy." Byron suddenly quipped with a grin, immediately causing Anton to hiss at him in unkempt fury at the mention of the



humiliating incident and everyone else to break out into murmurs at the reminder of the issue.

“SHUT UP! I thought we clarified perfectly that I was not the father of her goddamn child! The test results clearly showed that—”

“It doesn’t matter what the test results said...What matters is that the gossip spread like wildfire that you, a distinguished member and son of the Malfoy family, may have fathered a bastard child out of wedlock. And with a prostitute, no less. That was a disgrace to the entire family!” Nadine agreed, her tone derisive and blunt.

“Watch your language, young lady.” Sebastian snapped sharply at his daughter, causing her to stiffen slightly in affront but otherwise direct a nod of apology towards him.

Draco laughed harshly at the memory, shaking his head in disgust. “The stupid slut wasn’t even that pretty to begin with. She looked like a dog. I don’t even know why you knocked her up—”

“I DID NOT GET HER PREGNANT! BYRON, YOU SHOULDN’T HAVE BROUGHT THIS ISSUE UP TO BEGIN WITH!” Anton shouted furiously, causing Lorraine to flinch at his voice and hostile form, Byron to collapse in a fit of laughter and all his other cousins to sneer at Anton in scorn.

“Also, don’t forget his little affair with Draco’s former girlfriend... What was her name...Elisa? The girl was nothing but a brainless, money-grabbing chit...Everyone in the family hated her.” Reggie chimed in further with a smirk, causing Draco to stiffen and Anton to growl loudly at him in heightening anger.

Byron took that opportunity to reward Reggie with a grin, reaching over to ruffle the other Malfoy’s hair. “Reggie! You’re being mean and horrible! You’re a Malfoy after all, I’m so proud!” He kidded, causing William to hide a snort of laughter and Reggie to bat his hand away in annoyance.

Despite the fact that Lucius was beginning to find this little display amusing, his head was beginning to throb from all the shouting and

he banged his fist several times against the table again, causing another moment of silence to fall upon the family.

“Silence!”

At once, everyone stopped speaking and turned to look at the Malfoy head. Anton, who had reached over to wrap one of his clawed hands around Bryon’s neck, glared but slowly sat back and resumed his human form, his face slowly easing back into his beautiful, otherwise fuming features.

Lucius took a deep breath before turning once more to Draco, speaking in a calmer tone of voice. “Alright...So I think it is safe to presume that Anton was the first to initiate hostilities. That still did not give you the right to humiliate yourself like that, Draco... And for that, the two of you are to blame.” He admonished firmly, causing his son to stiffen in indignation.

“Clearly both Draco and Anton were out of line this time...And not long after Draco’s recent scandal about the Cirisserum potion too. This will no doubt spawn a new swarm of gossip about us in the newspapers if we do not do something about it.” Lawrence finally spoke up in a soft hiss, drawing everyone’s attention to the former, powerful Malfoy head.

Draco tried not to cower under his grandfather’s burning glare, knowing full well that if there was one Malfoy patriarch that intimidated him completely – it was not his father but his grandfather, Lawrence Adrian Malfoy. Even Byron seemed to be afraid of the man as they all still remembered the days the older Malfoy would force him, Anton, William, Reggie and even Draco on some occasions to kneel on their bare knees for hours on the sharp pebbles covering the grounds of the manor’s gardens as punishment for embarrassing behavior as children.

Lawrence had always been a strong, influence in the family – sometimes more so than Lucius – and was clearly the most difficult to win over in terms of approval. Draco could still remember the embarrassing situations Alexandra, Nadine and Elaine’s own

husbands have had to go through as suitors under Lawrence's censure. He was, undoubtedly, not an easy man to earn respect from.

"What do you propose then, father...?" Lucius obliged, knowing that was what the older man had implied with his carefully chosen words. Unblinking, the older Malfoy turned from Lucius' gaze to face Draco with an unreadable look in his aged, otherwise still astonishingly handsome face.

Upon closer inspection, Draco noticed for the first time that despite what other people said, it was undeniable that he clearly took after his grandfather more than he ever did with Lucius. He saw that now as he inspected the older man's cold, commanding silver eyes, harsh, arrogant sneer and domineering aura. Lawrence held himself with more harsh power and pride than Lucius, and that was perhaps the reason Draco saw more of himself in the former's aura than the latter. He carried his grandfather's countenance of ominous pride, stubbornness and thirst for authority. And he couldn't really tell if that was a bad discovery for him or not.

His thoughts were broken when Lawrence spoke again, drawing everyone's attention to his cold sneer. "I propose...That we not only shorten Draco's agreed deadline to find a suitable match for this season—"

Draco instantly colored in panic, his eyes narrowing in outrage. "Grandfather, you can't be serious! I can't find—"

"—if he doesn't find a suitable wife for himself within the shorter time frame...The family shall choose for him." Lawrence continued harshly as though he hadn't heard him, keeping his piercing gaze on Draco's equally glaring face.

"Lawrence, honey... don't you think that is a bit harsh? Draco has another six months before—"

"—Genevieve, hush. I propose you cut it down to three months, Lucius." The older Malfoy stated firmly, interrupting Genevieve's softy spoken reasoning voice and causing Draco's face to turn ashen in shock while Anton simply sneered in amusement.

“THREE MONTHS?! I CAN’T GET A BRIDE IN THREE MONTHS—”

“—the shorter we cut down his hunting period... The less scandals and mishaps our family will endure within that time. Do you all not think so? Time should be of no consequence for a Malfoy, after all...Besides, all you have to do is best Potter in combat right? That should not be a problem for you, Draco.” Lawrence continued to ignore Draco’s tirade, easily returning the same identical, contemptuous sneer Draco was giving him.

Then, turning to Anton, Lawrence allowed his sneer to harden even more. “As for you, Anton...You have certainly proven yourself a disgrace to the family name. You are to steer clear of your cousin for the remainder of the season.” He ordered coldly, causing Anton’s eyes to flash.

“What?! But—”

“I will have Byron drop into Hogwarts from time to time...Should I hear of you being so much as a mile from Draco, I will have you pulled out of Hogwarts and sent back to France faster than you can say your name. Any more trouble from you and you will be disowned completely from the entire family.” Lucius followed further in an angry hiss, instantly causing Anton’s mouth to snap shut and to stare dumbfounded at him and Louis’ face to redden in silent anger.

“You will not threaten my son that way, Lucius—”

“Silence, Louis! I am the head of this family and I will do as I please. You will not interfere.” Lucius snarled angrily, immediately causing his brother to snap his mouth shut similar to the way Anton had awhile ago and glare at the Malfoy head in silent loathing.

Reggie and William both seemed to be hiding smirk behind their hands while Byron, on the other hand, looked positively riveted with excitement at the proposal. “I get to visit Hogwarts from time to time, eh? Well then I guess I’ll try out my own moves on this season’s prime debutante, shall I? With any luck, maybe I can beat her in

battle and she'll marry me." He kidded, causing Draco to growl menacingly at him.

"Try it and die, Morpho." He threatened, causing Byron to laugh in amusement at the nickname the Malfoy heir had taken to calling him as a form of mockery.

"To all of you...I am to hear no more of any public displays that will bring about more humiliation upon the family name. Is that understood?" Lucius demanded fiercely, directing his voice to the younger generation of Malfoys, all of which nodded silently in assent.

"That includes you, Lorraine... I hear from Louis here that you are to be engaged to Philippe Winchester soon. Such a marriage will be good for both families...Don't you dare mess that up." Lawrence added in a drawl and Louis stiffly inclined his head in agreement, causing Lorraine to redden nervously at their words.

"What are we to do of the rumors following the debutante ball, Uncle Lucius?" Elaine suddenly spoke up, practically bubbling in curiosity and causing Lorraine to roll her eyes in annoyance at her gossip-hungry cousin's impertinent question.

"Excellent question, Elaine...Markus, if you would...?" Lucius turned to Alexandra's dark-haired, roguishly handsome husband Markus Princeton, who incidentally was also the owner and manager of nearly all Wizarding and muggle publication companies in England. Markus immediately smirked and nodded, gesturing briefly to a nearby house-elf to fetch one of the handsome family eagle owls.

"I was just about to initiate correspondence with my secretary at the office—"

"Tsss... Initiate correspondence? Why can't you just say you were about to 'write a letter'?" Byron wondered out loud with such an ironic bluntness that made Lorraine stifle a giggle, Reggie to hide a smile and Alexandra level him with a fierce, scathing glare.

Pointedly ignoring Byron's comment, Markus continued. "I will have her arrange to remove any implication of the Malfoy family's

involvement in the entire incident from every newspaper publication I control. It may take some...persuasion...from the rival companies though.” He added as an afterthought but Lucius merely waved the concern aside.

“We will discuss financial matters later...I am positive there is nothing that a good sum of money will not fix for those money-grabbing scoundrels. In fact, pay off that Skeeter woman too... If I’m not mistaken, she was the only one who dared to publicize the family name last time regarding the Cirisserum potion.” Lucius added as an afterthought, shaking his head.

“Now... Regarding the recent letters we have received speaking of blackmail using the photos from the debutante ball... Quentin?” Lucius turned Elaine’s husband – a very tall man with sharp features and nearly black eyes.

One of the most dangerous and powerful leaders of many illegal business chains and dealings within the British underworld, Quentin smiled coldly and nodded, following Markus’ example by gesturing to the house-elf to fetch another owl.

“It will be taken care of.” Was all he said and no one followed his statement with any other questions, knowing that the matter was best left alone to Quentin’s knowledge than to any of theirs in these heavy, controversial matters.

“Lastly...I understand Malfoy Multinational Conglomerates’ stocks have taken a serious beating due to the embarrassing events that have happened concerning Draco as my successor to the company...If you will, Richard...? I gather you can handle this?” Lucius asked, turning to the sandy-blond man beside Nadine.

Richard smirked and nodded his agreement and in a vivid contrast to the previous two, reached into his pocket and pulled out his muggle cellular phone. “I believe it much more convenient to handle my businesses by cellular communication.” He excused himself, causing the other Malfoys to chuckle in amusement.

“I will contact my secretary to gather all financial analysts, corporate lawyers and investment brokers from my consultancy firm immediately. They will arrive in MMC in less than an hour and repair all the damages done to the company stocks.” Richard assured them, causing Lucius to nod in gratitude.

“I am in all your debt.” The Malfoy head said calmly to the three men, all of which returned his words with their own silent nods. “Very well, I suppose that settles the matters pertaining to cleaning up the mess you two made.” Lucius drawled again, turning to Draco and Anton’s silently glaring forms.

“Lucius... I think that’s enough. Draco and Anton are hardly the only ones to blame for this mess.” Genevieve spoke up again, causing Lucius’ to glance briefly at his mother’s aged but still exquisitely beautiful face. The chestnut-haired woman smiled imploringly at him and Lucius sighed, shaking his head and knowing full well that he could not deny his soft-spoken mother anything.

“Pritchard... Will you be able to use your political influence to relay our sincerest apologies to all the involved pureblooded families in the fight? As well as the Ministry of Magic? It will not do us any good to be on their bad graces, after all. We have an image to uphold.” Genevieve requested, turning to her most affectionate son who was also incidentally, William, Alexandra, and Elaine’s very popular, congenial father.

Pritchard rewarded her with a small smile, nodding and leaning down to give his mother’s hand a kiss on the back of her palm. “Whatever you say, Mother...You know none of us here can deny you. Not even Louis.” He responded teasingly, causing all her other sons – Lucius, Sebastian, Claudius, and Louis– to smile fondly at their beloved mother in a very short and rare moment of affection seen only within the members of the family.

Witnessing the uncommon display of affection, Anton fought the urge to roll his eyes while Byron and Lorraine smiled at each other in amusement. Draco kept his face completely blank and coldly guarded, his attention not on his family’s display of emotion toward his grandmother but on the fact that his hunting period had been cut

down to three months and he still had no idea how to make Jaimee marry him.

The Malfoy heir was so absorbed in his own thoughts and worries that he kept to himself in silent, angry glowering and never noticed his grandfather rising from his seat. Lawrence excused himself briefly and turned sharply to give Byron a meaningful look.

“Byreguard Aaron Malfoy... A word in Lucius’ office, if you please.” Lawrence drawled softly, causing the other Malfoys to look at him in confusion. Byron winced irritably at the use of his much-hated full name and sighed as he stood up from his seat and followed his distinguished grandfather back into Lucius’ study, shutting the door softly behind him.

Once they were alone, Byron looked up at his grandfather’s unreadable expression and tried his best not to cower in nervousness the older Malfoy’s intimidating presence.

“Yes, grandfather? Was there anything you needed?”

Lawrence merely blinked before smirking to himself, turning to give his grandson a cold smile. Upon seeing the dark cynicism in the man’s face, Byron’s right eyebrow rose in anxiety.

“Grandfather?”

The former Malfoy head sneered, a grim, decisive gleam seen clearly in his harsh eyes. “Pertaining to Draco’s courtship of Miss Potter...I believe it is just about time we take matters into our own hands and ensured his happiness.”

Hearing this, Bryon’s eyes widened and he slowly sat himself down on one of the chairs near Lucius’ table. “What are you going to do, grandfather?” He asked worriedly, his eyebrows creased together as he tried to contemplate the man’s words.

Lawrence slowly sat down the chair opposite him, stroking his chin carefully as he thought.



"I want you to accompany me today, Byreguard..." Byron winced once more at another mention of his first name.

"I believe a visit to Gringotts is in order."

It was exactly a couple of surprisingly peaceful mornings after the debutante ball that Harry found herself sitting alone in a small table in the Hogwarts library, glaring angrily into the back of a petite, cute third year Slytherin student who was, at the moment, staring blissfully into Draco's handsome features with a lovesick smile on her blushing face.

The Head Boy seemed unaware of both Harry's glaring or the first year student's admiring stares at him and continued to tutor the said student in what, Harry could only assume from the mess of thick books lying around their table, was Arithmancy. Growling under her breath, Jaimee watched with narrowed eyes as the student fluttered her eyelashes coyly at Draco in what was meant as a flirtatious gesture, something that Draco certainly did not fail to notice.

At this point, Jaimee would have been able to look away in disgust but instead, her eyes immediately widened in anger as Draco seemed to find his tutee's little crush amusing and smirked in self-satisfaction at the girl, unknowingly causing Jaimee to shred the long Potions essay she had been working on into an angry pile of mulch.

All attempts at studying or homework forgotten, she shoved her books aside and failed to notice both Ron and Hermione plopping down beside her as she continued to glare in seething rage at the offending table near the corner of the room. She watched the younger Slytherin giggle and slide her chair slightly closer to Draco as she pretended to look over his shoulder at the array of Arithmancy equations he was scribbling onto a piece of parchment.

"Harry...?"

Ignoring Hermione's concerned voice, Jaimee gritted her teeth in frustration as the third year Slytherin – Ginger or Apple some other stupid food name along those lines – turned and beckoned a couple

of her other girl friends over, finally causing a large group of third year Ravenclaw and Slytherin students to join them and surround their table in excitement.

Draco didn't seem to mind the extra attention and this did nothing to soothe Jaimee's raging jealousy. Instead, the smirking blonde crossed his arms smugly over his chest, leaned back casually in his seat to arrogantly stretch his legs out and finally met them with a sexy smile. He arched a single eyebrow before inclining his head towards the other empty seats in front of him in amusement. When the girls all giggled and hurriedly fought each other to sit next to him, he chuckled and resumed his little Arithmancy tutor session – obviously enjoying the fact that none of his so-called tutees seemed to understand a word he was saying.

I can't believe him! Stupid, slimy conceited jerk! What an obnoxious little flirt! Jaimee thought angrily, her hands clenched into tight fists and she shifted her glare from the giggling third years to the back of Draco's head. She watched as he leaned in particularly close to whisper something to an attractive Ravenclaw with blonde curls, causing the girl to blush at the attention and shift in her seat.

In a sporadic moment of illogical impulse, Jaimee growled, yanked her large potions book up from the table and hurled it violently across the room towards the back of the smirking blonde's head. Unfortunately – or rather fortunately for Draco – he had chosen that particular moment to lean down and grab something from his bag and Jaimee's book ended up zooming over his head and hitting Justin Finch-Fletchley in the next table.

Seeing the other student cry out in pain and collapse to the floor, Draco looked confused for a minute before sneering disgustedly at the poor Hufflepuff and turning back to his crowd of doe-eyed young girls. He opened his large Arithmancy book and beginning to rattle off some complicated formulas in his assertive, drawling voice.

Stupid arrogant sodding git! He has some nerve to duck! He didn't even bring me my book back! He's too busy flirting! I ought to go over there and kick his arse! Jaimee thought to herself again, her face red with barely controlled fury as one girl in particular reached over and

removed an imaginary piece of lint from Draco's shoulder in a rather blatant attempt to touch him.

At this, however, Draco merely smirked to himself again and made no attempt to tell her off. Jaimee was just about ready to stalk over to him and wipe his stupid smirk off his face with a good punch followed by a satisfying body-binding curse or jinx when Hermione finally snapped beside her, causing both Jaimee and Ron to jump in surprise.

“HARRY!!”

A couple of heads turned sharply towards their table and a number of irritated “shhh”s seemed to fly at them from every direction of the room, causing all three Gryffindors to sink down onto their seats and flush in embarrassment. Both Ron and Harry turned to glare at Hermione in annoyance.

“What?! Can't you see I'm busy studying?!” Jaimee growled back, turning to bare her teeth at the Head Girl but Hermione only narrowed her eyes back in equal irritation. “Studying what?! The complicated formulas written on the back of Malfoy's head?!” The Head Girl snapped sarcastically, causing Harry to redden and Ron to snigger in amusement.

“In case you haven't noticed, Ron and I have joined you about twenty minutes ago! What's wrong with you?!” The brunette added further in an angry hiss, causing the blush on Jaimee's face to darken further in realization.

“Yeah...So? I'm busy. Was there anything you two needed?” She grumbled miserably, finally tearing her eyes away from Draco and his flirtatious antics to her two best friends – one of which looked amused while the other looked just as irritated as she felt.

“Blimey, Harry! He's being a stupid arse, he is! Look at him flirting with all those girls like that; doesn't he realize he's humiliating you?! I'm going to go over there and –” Ron stopped mid-rage when Hermione firmly placed a hand over his shoulder and shook her head in exasperation.

“Ron, calm down! Malfoy is not doing anything wrong. Those girls are flirting with him. McGonagall assigned us both – Head Boy and Head Girl – to tutor some of the younger students all throughout this week since our midterms are coming up. I actually have to tutor some younger years myself this afternoon.” She informed them but Harry only grumbled in response.

“Then why does the smarmy bastard feel the need to tutor an entire batch of airheaded girls who do nothing but stare at him the entire time? He’s even encouraging the stupid chits.” She grumbled under her breath, causing Hermione to smirk at her in amusement.

Ron snorted, rolling his eyes at Harry’s behavior. “Why should you even care who he flirts with? He was a sodding, flirtatious playboy even then, it never bothered you before. It’s not like he’s your boyfriend or anything.” He pointed out and at hearing the word ‘boyfriend’, Harry immediately stiffened in alarm.

“I am not bothered! I just – As a girl now, I feel that I should be appalled by his antics—”

“Do I detect a note of jealousy in your voice, Miss prime debutante?” Hermione teased, immediately causing Jaimee to snap her head to glare at her in flushed outrage and Ron to stifle his sniggers behind his hand. “I am not jealous! Are you both insane?!” She raged, causing Madam Pince to hush them sharply again from where she sat near the entrance of the library.

Blushing, Jaimee winced at the reprimand before turning to face her two sniggering best friends again and gave them a pointed look. “I am not jealous.” She whispered more calmly, blushing darker when Hermione merely raised a sardonic eyebrow in response.

“I just...I’m disgusted that he’s such a—a clandestine flirt! I mean, look at him!” She gestured to the handsome blonde near the end of the room and both Ron and Hermione followed her gaze to see Draco leaning over his seat to explain more of the complicated equations he was scribbling onto the sheet of paper in front of the girls gathered around him.

“Uhm...Harry...From what I see, he’s not doing anything else aside from tutoring them. In fact, he seems to be ignoring the girls’ staring. I think you’re being a tad bit paranoid.” Hermione pointed out bluntly and at hearing her words, Jaimee gave her a poisonous glare.

“What are you talking about?! He’s flirting like an arse – he and his stupid fan club of gushing girls should be thrown out of the library for indecent behavior!” She impatiently hissed back, gritting her teeth. Hermione’s eyebrows fused together at her friend’s behavior before she turned her attention back to the blonde Slytherin in confusion just as he bent down to scribble more calculations onto a sheet of parchment with a serious expression on his otherwise nonchalant face.

At this, Hermione and Ron met each other’s confused but otherwise amused smirks, shaking their heads in amusement at Jaimee’s behavior.

“Uhm. He looks like he’s just solving some Arithmancy to me.” Ron mused, causing Harry to hit him upside the head in irritation. Ron growled at this, rubbing the back of his head in pain but Jaimee was no longer looking at him and was again, glaring daggers at her supposed archrival across the room.

As though Draco finally felt their stares on him, his eyes narrowed suspiciously and he turned around in confusion. The minute he did, Jaimee hastily snapped her gaze away in alarm, unwittingly bumping her head against Ron’s and causing both Gryffindors to cry out loud in pain.

“Ow! Bloody hell, Harry! Would you watch it?!” Ron complained loudly, rubbing the forming bruise on his forehead but again, Harry was no longer listening and was instead, pretending to busy herself with reading her upside down Arithmancy book.

Hermione, however, sick of her friend’s theatrics, yanked the book from the girl’s hands and slammed it on the table before turning to Harry with a pointed glare. “Harry. Would you stop acting like an immature, jealous first year and listen to what I have to say first?!”

Forget about Malfoy for a minute!" She snapped, finally causing the raven-haired girl to blush in realization and nod, turning back to look intently at her.

When she was sure she had both her best friends' attention, she sighed and placed something firmly in the middle of the table and winced in anticipation when Jaimee's eyes riveted onto it in curiosity. With bated breath, she waited as the other girl's eyes slowly widened as she picked up the magazine, holding it up to her face to inspect the article plastered on the very front page.

## Hogwarts' Debutante Disaster

by Rita Skeeter

Perhaps one of the biggest scandals to befall upon British Wizarding Society since the sexual transformation of the Boy-Who-Lived, the Annual Debutante Ball hosted by Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry last weekend literally became an arena of shameful disaster.

It was precisely around 10 in the evening that this season's newly introduced batch of young debutantes witnessed the sudden, horrifying outburst of high testosterone clashes between young bachelors of just about every social caliber who chose to regale the lovely evening with a brutal display of vulgarity and violence amongst themselves. Although the actual events as to how the physical brawl itself began remains unknown and irrelevant, sources have confirmed that the fight had been initiated from the spark of a fierce rivalry to win over a particular debutante's affections.

Although the debutante involved, who upon adamant requests from shall remain nameless, is said to have initially acted as a catalyst for the fight, it soon escalated out of anyone's direct responsibility. About fifty bachelors – most of which were the named heirs of society's most prestigious families – were soon engaged in a hideous mess of limbs, blood, and broken glass. Among the reputable pureblooded heirs rumored to have been involved within the fight were – Viktor Mikhail Krum, Oswald Cunningham, Blaise Elliot Zabini, Philippe Ray Winchester and even Nicholas Fudge – the son of Cornelius Fudge, the Minister of Magic.

The slightly less influential, pureblooded names also involved in the fight were Ron Bilius Weasley, Anthony Dirk Goldstein, Malcolm Pellerin, Theodore Jacob Nott and Terrence Boot – all of which were also seen to have been involved in the fight with those already mentioned above. Unfortunately, the exact proceedings of the fight itself remains to be seen – as well as the actual reason as to why or how these young men managed to involve themselves in one way or another.

As of the moment, none of the families mentioned above have agreed to step forward in an attempt to justify their son's actions nor has there been any official statements from any of the families pertaining to matters of accusations or future actions to be taken in light of the events that have happened. Until then, your daily reporter – as always – will keep you constantly updated as to any further news regarding the entertainingly controversial elites of our very own pureblood society.

Harry set the paper down in confusion, looking up to see Hermione's equally puzzled face and Ron's humiliated glowering.

"There's...No mention of me or the Malfoy family anywhere in here. That's...strange considering it's Rita Skeeter and she makes it her personal hobby to rub any amount of dung on my name whenever she can with opportunities like these..." Jaimee mused out loud, ignoring Ron's loud grumbling as the red-haired Gryffindor began reading the article again.

"Slightly less influential pureblooded names?! Could she have been more degrading with her words? I'm sorry if I'm not as politically powerful as those stuck-up Winchesters or Zabinis..." Ron grumbled to himself but Hermione chose to ignore him, giving Jaimee a pointed smile.

"Isn't it obvious, Harry? The Malfoys are the only ones who aren't mentioned in this article... They obviously pulled family connections again and made sure that neither Draco nor Anton's names were

implicated in the gossip. Draco must have made sure you weren't involved in the gossip as well. He obviously did that to protect you." Hermione concluded smugly, causing Jaimee to scoff in disbelief.

"Or it could just be that his family purposely paid Skeeter off to keep my name out of it because any mention of my name could easily be traced back to Draco or Anton either way." She countered derisively and at that, Hermione fell silent in uncertainty.

"Did you guys not hear what I said? Can you believe what that Skeeter woman said about me?!" Ron complained louder and at his words, both girls turned sharply and leveled him with a fierce, irritated glare.

"Get over it, Ron. Your masculine insecurities can be a tad tiresome sometimes, it's really getting old. I don't know how I ever put up with it when we were going out." Hermione snapped, narrowing her eyes at him and at that, Ron managed to return her glare with a mocking snort.

"Oh yeah? Well I don't know how I ever put up with your unstable mood swings and horrible temper. I doubt you'll get any guy this season by being the little know-it-all you are." He snapped back, narrowing his own eyes.

Hermione gaped at him, her eyes flashing in indignation. "I do not act like a know-it-all! How dare you—"

"Guys, give me the society and gossip tabloids." Jaimee interrupted sharply, effectively cutting off Hermione's retort before the argument escalated further. She tried not to let her irritation show as Hermione sighed in exasperation before slowly handing her one of the tabloids, carefully observing the other girl's reaction.

With bated breath, Jaimee slowly unfolded the article and almost immediately, her green eyes had narrowed into tiny, angry slits.

Jillian Aimee Potter: This Season's Prime Catch

By Monica Hupplecook (Society and Gossip)



Our traditional hunting season has definitely taken a more interesting and exciting turn of events this year – no doubt thanks to the recent addition of Jillian Aimee Potter to the list of debutantes earlier this year. Already branded as this season's Prime Debutante, our young hero-turned-heroine has added even more historical twists and turns into the scene with her recent declaration following her debut into Wizarding society last weekend.

It has thus been confirmed that Miss Potter, upon her own words, has finally agreed upon the terms to which she will agree to marry a potential suitor. For many of you aspiring bachelors out there hoping to aim for this fiery, beautiful young woman, heed her words carefully:

"I will take no more dates for courtship or arrangements to meet suitors. Nor will I join any more of these ridiculous social events to promote myself as a debutante..."

"I will agree to marry the first man who manages to best me fairly in a magical combat. Whoever he may be, I will marry him."

Unfortunately, not only is Jaimee formerly Harry Potter, the defeater of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named but she also remains holding – three years running so far – the title of England's Champion Magical Combatant.

Well! It seems our young bachelors have quite a challenge on their hands then. We wish you all the best of luck for the remainder of this season and promise to provide you always with the latest, juiciest gossip from every knick and corner of the Wizarding World!

A happy hunting season to everyone!

"Good for nothing bitch!"

Hermione and Ron both winced as Harry slammed down the newspaper back onto the table, earning another handful of glares at them but this time, they merely aggravated the Gryffindor's ire even

more as she finally noticed the evident smirks and amusement in the other students' eyes as they eyed her – no doubt having read the article already.

Draco had finally looked up and was now staring at her with an undecipherable expression on his face but Jaimee didn't notice either way as she slammed her fist into the table again, letting out another stream of curse words from her mouth.

"Bloody gossip mongers! Don't they ever just leave me the hell alone?! They make it appear as though my life is some bloody soap opera!" She snarled, sighing as she buried her head into her hands.

"They're just gossip tabloids, Harry...No one pays any attention to them anyway." Hermione said uncertainly, causing Jaimee's head to snap up as she shrugged off Ron's comforting hand and snatched the different tabloids from Hermione's hand, studying and reading each title with flashing green eyes.

Ron and Hermione both fidgeted uncomfortably as they watched her scan the articles one by one, growing angrier by the minute. Surprisingly enough, however, she set down the last one and sighed, letting her head drop back into her hands.

"I'm so tired of all this...I don't want to do this anymore. Can't I just go back to my old life and be a guy again?" She asked softly, looking up to meet her friends' worried faces but neither of them answered her and remained silent, looking at each other expectantly for a response.

When neither of them spoke, Ron grumbled and began rifling through the gossip tabloids in front of him in an effort to distract himself. "I wonder if they keep any dirt in here about that scumbag Winchester..." He wondered out loud, causing Hermione to sigh in exasperation.

Instead of berating him, she forced a bright smile and turned back to Jaimee. Her smile immediately faded however, when she saw that the other girl had simply buried her face into her hands and was now muttering nonsensical curses under her breath.

Sighing, Hermione leaned over and patted her friend consolingly on the back.

“It isn’t so bad, Harry...The gossip will die down soon enough, you’ll see. Besides... Midterms are coming up soon so that should give you something to get your mind off things, right? Soon, you’ll feel like your old self again.” She comforted soothingly, squeezing the other girl’s shoulders.

Jaimee suddenly froze, letting Hermione’s words process carefully in her mind.

“My old self again...”

Upon repeating the words to herself, she seemed to stiffen in silent realization.

“Harry...?” It was Ron who had spoken up this time and he eyed his best friend in confusion, watching as Harry slowly lifted her head up off the table, blinked once before staring thoughtfully into empty space.

Hermione met Ron’s eyes again and she was just about to ask the other girl what was wrong again when Jaimee suddenly shot up from her seat, causing Hermione to jump in surprise and Ron to drop the sheets of tabloids he was holding.

“Harry! What—”

“Sorry! I have to go! I’ll see you guys later!” She rushed out, hastily stuffing her books and things back into her shoulder bag before giving them a quick nod and storming off toward the library exit, leaving both Gryffindors staring after her with their jaws gaping in midsentence.

After a couple more seconds of silence, Ron turned to Hermione and raised a single eyebrow in inquiry. “Do you have any idea what she was on about?” He asked curiously, looking from her back to the exit where Harry had rushed off to.

At this question, Hermione could only shake her head in shocked stupor.

“I beg your pardon, Jaimee...?”

Jaimee glared forcefully at the Headmaster from where she stood right in the middle of his large office, her chin set firmly in defiance and a resilient glowing in her green eyes that clearly spoke of the horrors she would inflict should the old man refuse her request.

“You heard me, Professor. I wish to wear my old Hogwarts uniform and wish to be transferred back into the boy’s dormitory with the other Gryffindor seventh year boys.” She repeated carefully, her voice clear and resolute as she met Albus Dumbledore’s startled eyes from where he was still seated on his large desk.

Before the old man could respond, she spoke again – this time directing her attention to the half-gaping, half-sputtering Professor McGonagall standing beside him who was currently looking as though she was choking on her own breath.

“I thought I made it clear last weekend. I want no more of this debutante rubbish or social traditions of propriety. I wish to revert to my former life before any of this gender-changing incident ever happened and as I am still the same person either way, you have no right to refuse me.” She added further with an angry glare.

At hearing this, Professor McGonagall finally spoke – her voice sounding strangled as she stepped forward and tried to jostle the Gryffindor girl back to her senses.

“Potter! We cannot put you back into your original dormitory. It would be a horrible breach of conduct – what would people say when they find out that the school let you, a woman, sleep in a dormitory room with four men every night?” She reasoned, causing Harry to flinch in anger.

“I am only a woman biologically, Professor. I want my life back. I demand that you grant me this one simple request...I have never

asked for anything else.” She spoke firmly, this time directing her voice to Dumbledore.

Surprisingly enough, Dumbledore looked as though he was thoroughly amused by the entire situation. Reaching over to grab a stick of licorice from his table, he chewed on it thoughtfully for a moment before turning back to grin at the young Gryffindor.

“Very well then. Minerva, see to it that Jaimee’s things are moved back into her original dormitory and send the house-elves to fetch her an extra set of male uniforms as soon as possible. Will that be all, Miss Potter?” Dumbledore asked cheerfully, turning to reward both women with a bright, jovial smile.

At his agreement, Harry’s face broke out into a grin while McGonagall, on the other hand, turned a scandalized red. Striding over to the chuckling Headmaster, she set her lips firmly into a straight line and gave the man a reprimanding look.

“Albus...You cannot be serious. After months of training Potter to be female, surely you understand that this simply cannot be done. She has suitors to attend to...feminine conduct and customs to uphold. Society will question us for allowing her to continue as a man when she is clearly a woman!” She hissed and at that, Dumbledore merely chuckled and turned to give Harry a wink.

“Surely she can still ‘attend’ to her potential suitors in the midst of her former life...? I doubt it takes much feminine conduct to engage in a magical combat? Besides...I believe it is about time we allow Harry to adapt to being a woman in her own way.” He explained softly, causing Professor McGonagall to sigh in exasperation and Jaimee to grin wider.

“Thank you, Professor.” She blurted out, inclining her head briefly towards the old man in a gesture of gratitude. It seemed to her, at that specific moment, that the barmy old man wasn’t as completely insane as she thought he was.

Just as a red-faced McGonagall was about to exit the office, Dumbledore called out to her again – causing the head of Gryffindor

house to turn around just in time to see Dumbledore offering Jaimee from a large box of cockroach clusters.

“Oh and Minerva...?”

Pursing her lips in displeasure, McGonagall raised an eyebrow expectantly at him in an obvious anticipation of his relent but the old wizard simply chose to return her look with another wide grin, his blue eyes twinkling merrily.

“Do make sure the house-elves cast the proper shrinking spells on the male uniforms before giving them to Jaimee. I do believe she has gotten a lot smaller to fit into her old ones.” He mused carefully, causing Jaimee to smirk in amusement as she caught sight of McGonagall’s look of pure exasperation and contempt towards the man.

With a glare, the elderly woman gave an indignant grumble before turning on her heel and storming out of the room in a huff – slamming the door loudly behind her just as Harry had begun retching loudly in unladylike gasps from having bitten into the rather disgusting piece of cluster Dumbledore had offered her.

“Hey Hermione... Do you think Philippe Winchester is good-looking?” Ron asked nonchalantly later that day in the Great Hall just as he was leafing over one of the newspapers scattered on the Gryffindor table.

Hermione rolled her eyes at his question, reaching over and snatching the newspaper from his hands to take a look. Peering closer at the small picture of the pureblood in question, she raised an eyebrow in thought before answering.

“Well... He certainly has very refined features. His hair looks immaculate, though... I’ll bet it’s really silky if you run your fingers through it.” She mused out loud, oblivious to how Ron had glared at her and was now running a hand through his uncombed red hair.

“I can fix my hair too you know...” He grumbled, sighing before turning back to his breakfast in silence. Hermione shrugged and set

the article back down before turning back to finish her potions essay, looking up just in time to see Neville join them with a bright smile.

“Morning, everyone! It’s a wonderful day, isn’t it?” He greeted cheerfully as he plopped down next to Hermione, reaching over and helping himself to a batch of pancakes. Ron grunted in reply while Hermione merely looked at him in annoyance, noting the distinct glow on the other boy’s face.

“What’s with you...? Did you get laid or something, Neville?” Seamus asked bluntly from where he and Dean sat on the other side of the table. At his words, Neville flushed bright red and shook his head hastily amidst Ron and Dean’s sniggers.

“N—No! Nothing like that! I—It’s just...Well... Luna and I had a lovely night, that’s all. I don’t want to rush things for now so I haven’t exactly brought up marriage or anything of the sort.” He told them, still blushing as Dean gave him an amused smirk.

“That’s wonderful, Neville. I’m really happy for you.” Hermione said warmly, trying her best to smile at the other boy when the truth was, she was more than irritated at having somebody else’s successful love life being flaunted in front of her when hers was failing miserably.

Seamus winked at Dean and Ron before turning back to Neville with a sly smile. “So, Neville... I’ve always been curious... Are you a virgin?” He asked loudly, immediately causing Neville to spit out a whole mouthful of pumpkin juice.

“Wha—What?!”

At hearing his reaction, Ron and Dean had gone into hysterics while even Hermione was trying to hide a smile with her essay, turning her gaze away from Neville so he couldn’t see her amusement. “Wh—What kind of question is that?! Of course I am! Aren’t you guys? Ron?!” He asked, turning a shocked gaze to the red-head but Ron simply reddened and looked away with an uncomfortable look on his face.

“I’m not a virgin, Neville.” He said quietly, causing Seamus to whistle in appreciation and Dean to look at him in shock. “You’re not a virgin, Ron?? Who did you do it with?! Harry?!” He asked, his voice cracking and at that Ron sputtered in horror, knocking the other boy over the head.

“Of course not! Harry’s my best friend, you gits!” He growled, narrowing his eyes at Dean’s sniggering. Seamus merely snorted, rolling his eyes at the idea. “Yeah right... He wishes it had been Harry. Even I couldn’t sleep with the damn bloke...And I’ve been trying since fifth year. Damn hero is probably still a virgin.” He complained, causing Dean to growl at him in threat.

“Stop lamenting over Harry while I’m right here, Seamus—”

“Harry isn’t a virgin, Seamus.”

All four boys turned to look at Hermione and were thoroughly surprised to find the Gryffindor girl blushing very profusely and shifting under their gaze. “How would you know, Hermione? Harry never spoke of any sexual exploits with us...At least not from what I can remember.” Ron countered, shaking his head but at that, Hermione blushed even darker, looking embarrassed.

“Harry is not a virgin, Ron. At least... As a guy, he isn’t.” She told him firmly but Ron looked even more confused and he scratched his head as he looked at her. “I don’t understand. How would you know that, Hermione? If there was ever someone Harry would tell, it would be me since I’m his guy best friend! You shouldn’t know something like that—”

Dean, however, was giving Hermione a very naughty smile. “Something you should be telling us, Hermione?” He asked casually, laughing when he saw the look of utter embarrassment on the Head Girl’s pretty features.

Neville and Seamus both started to laugh as well while Ron’s face took reddened with mixture of complete mortification and indignation. Turning to glare spitefully at Hermione, he growled and gave her a callous look. “Hermione! You slept with Harry while you two were



going out but you didn't with me? How could you?!" He demanded loudly but Hermione had now buried her face into her hands in an attempt to hide from their curious classmates watching.

"It was just that one time! We were both drunk and no one was in the room of requirement a and it was really romantic so—"

"Argh! I don't want to hear how my two best friends went at it!" Ron suddenly cried out, covering both his ears with his hands. Unfortunately, the group had gone into hysterics at this point – Dean and Seamus were beside themselves in their laughter while Neville had given up trying to eat and was clutching at his stomach in mirth.

Their laughter died out for a couple of minutes when they looked up and caught sight of Draco, Blaise, Lorraine and Anton entering the Great Hall and ushering in a moment of curious silence from the other tables. Upon seeing Blaise's face, Hermione's breath hitched into her throat and she snapped her gaze away, her cheeks coloring in anger.

Draco and Blaise, however, looked irritated at all the attention they were receiving and simply sauntered over to the Slytherin table. On the other hand, Anton smirked and dragged Lorraine over to sit at the other end of the room where the guests were seated, plopping himself down next to a group of attractive Beauxbaton students.

Once the Great Hall had resumed its usual activity, Ron turned back to Hermione and gave her a suggestive smirk. "So...Any chances of that little rendezvous happening again now that Harry's a girl? Because if there is, you know, I'd love to hear all the details." He mused, wincing when Hermione gave him a scandalized slap across his face.

He would have protested at that but it seemed that the Great Hall had fallen into another stunned silence and all four other Gryffindors were once again staring at the very entrance of the Hall, their jaws hanging open in shock. Following their gaze, Ron felt his own jaw hanging as well.

Sauntering calmly into the Great Hall was Harry Potter, still as biologically female as ever, decked out fully in her Hogwarts uniform – the male uniform.

Oddly enough, the masculine uniform looked surprisingly good on her slender frame, much to the roaming eyes of nearly every male in the room. The slacks had been tightened to fit her slim legs and the first two buttons of her white collared shirt was left unbuttoned, exposing a creamy patch of white skin just below her neck.

As she walked over to them, Hermione caught a better view of her appearance. Jaimee had pulled her hair up into a high ponytail, leaving several strands to frame her face while on her feet was a pair of magically shrunken, male black shoes. The male Gryffindor tie hung loosely from her neck while her old silver earring was once again reattached to her left ear.

Groaning, Hermione shook her head and buried her face in her hands at the sight.

She knew that Harry meant well by trying to dress up more like herself again but in all honesty, she wished she could tell her friend that she looked like one of those models she had seen in one of Ron's dirty magazines – that of a playful school girl who had put on men's clothing and was trying to seduce her lover with it.

And from the looks of lust on many of the male watching – and mixture of helpless amusement and possessive anger etched onto Draco's across the hall, Hermione knew her deductions were right.

Taking the seat next to Ron, Jaimee smirked at the gaping expressions on their faces and began loading a huge stack of pancakes onto her plate. Ignoring her friends' staring, she began wolfing down her pancakes with surprising speed until Hermione was finally the first to snap out of her gaze and give Harry a reprimanding glare.

"Harry! What on earth do you think you're doing wearing that?!" She demanded, her voice coming out in helpless squeak. Around them, they heard the other students beginning to whisper and murmur

excitedly amongst themselves again but Jaimee barely paid them any attention, shrugging and taking a long swig of juice before replying.

“I want my old life back, Hermione. I’m through with this debutante business. With any luck, no idiot will challenge me and I can live my life in peace again. If not, well then I’ll just have any excuse to kick pureblood arse.” She reasoned, chuckling to herself just as Ron blinked himself out his stupor.

Looking directly at Jaimee’s suspiciously concealed chest, Ron looked horrified and peered down closer in inspection. “Wh—What did you do to your—things?! Did you spell them away or something?!” He croaked out, using a single finger to poke at them.

Jaimee growled and flinched in anger while Ron, on the other hand, blushed darkly as he successfully felt what he had meant to find. “H—Hey, they’re still there! So—”

He never finished his sentence as he promptly fell from the side of the table, out cold from the harsh impact of Jaimee’s powerful punch to his jaw. As soon as Ron had fallen off, Jaimee grumbled moodily to herself and rubbed her sore fist in irritation before resuming her breakfast.

Seamus, however, resumed where Ron had stopped and looked curiously at Jaimee’s chest. “Blimey, Harry! What did you do to those two beautiful creatures?” He demanded, peering close toward her but this time, Harry simply pointed her wand directly at his face.

“Get any closer Finnegan and I will make your nose disappear.” She threatened, causing Neville to laugh and Hermione to blink in confusion. “They have a point, Harry... What did you do?” She asked, her own eyes inspecting her friend’s chest area.

At her question and the others’ curious glance, Jaimee blushed and shifted uncomfortably. “I borrowed a whole lot of bandages from Madame Pomfrey and I...well... I wrapped them down. They were getting a bit annoying, always sticking out like that so—”

“Oh for Merlin’s sake, Harry!” Hermione snapped as Seamus and Dean burst out into sniggers again and Neville shook his head in dismay.

“I also requested to move back into the Gryffindor dormitories with you guys.” Jaimee added further, giving Neville a grin. The other boy choked on her words, looking at her in disbelief. “Y—You mean... Back with us guys?” He managed to say, choking on his breakfast.

Jaimee nodded, looking pleased with herself. “Yup. It’s almost as if everything’s back to normal. Just like you said, Hermione...” She noted, smiling happily but she winced when she caught sight of Hermione’s exasperated expression.

“When I meant for things to be back to normal, I didn’t mean for you to do this! You took my advice too literally, Harry!” She countered just as Ron had finally regained consciousness and was getting back to his feet, rubbing his jaw in pain.

“Merlin, Harry! Did you have to punch so hard?! That bloody hurt! I can’t exactly fight back. You know I would never punch a girl!” Ron complained loudly, grumbling as he sat back down. Jaimee smirked at him, rolling her eyes.

“Speaking of which...Hey Harry, is it true that you and Hermione slept together when you were going out?” Dean suddenly piped in, causing Hermione to spit out her pumpkin juice, Neville to blush and Seamus to roar with laughter.

Ron reddened at the question but he was shocked to see that Harry had simply nodded, looking at their interested expressions in mild confusion.

“So we did...Is that a problem?” She asked quizzically, looking from one Gryffindor to the other. Hermione let out a strangled cry and whacked the other girl over the head in outrage, her cheeks bright red in embarrassment.

“Harry! I can’t believe you—”

“What is it about girls and their embarrassment over sex, Hermione? Stop being coy about it, it’s part of our sexuality. Besides, it’s not like we can do it again now...” Jaimee pointed out bluntly, rolling her eyes at her friend’s reaction. Then, with a playful smile, Jaimee leaned over toward the other girl and gave her a suggestive look.

“Unless of course, that’s your kind of thing, Hermione...In which case, I wouldn’t mind. I think that would be kind of hot.” She winked jokingly at her, causing Ron to burst out laughing as Hermione promptly slapped Harry hard across the cheek in scandalized indignation.

Jaimee clutched her cheek in pain but joined in on the other Gryffindor boys’ laughter. Hermione huffed to herself and promptly ignored them for the rest of the meal, shaking their head at their perverted antics.

“Boys...”

“Kingsley, I don’t understand! How could I have gotten a poor on this test?! I wiped out every single enemy on that range!” Jaimee protested loudly, rushing after the Instructing Auror after her training class that afternoon as he exited their classroom.

Kingsley Shacklebolt only sighed and shook his head, gesturing for the other Ministry Aurors behind him to hurry up in packing their things. Turning to the dismayed girl, he took one look at her progress report again before looking up and giving her an admonishing look.

“Potter, you’re an exceptional fighter. One of the best I’ve ever seen, to tell you the truth. But I’m afraid that will only take you so far when you’re an actual Auror out there.” He told her, turning away to start packing his weapons back into his pockets.

Jaimee gave an indignant huff, narrowing her eyes at his words. “What do you mean? I’ve beaten you countless times before! What gives you the right to tell me that I don’t have what it takes to be an Auror?” She snapped, looking irritated but Kingsley merely shook his head again.

Sighing, he gave her a consoling pat on the shoulder. “Kid...I told you. You are a magnificent and powerful fighter...But you’re also...Well...How should I say it...Kind of naïve.” He told her and hearing this, Jaimee’s eyebrows practically disappeared into her scalp.

“Er...What?”

“Clueless, Potter. You’re a little clueless.”

“What?! How dare you call me stupid?! I ought to kick your arse right now! I am not naïve—”

“You almost lost to Malfoy once because you grabbed the rose he tossed you without thinking. You drank the Cirisserum without inspecting it carefully first, thus your female body now. Your fighting skill deteriorates in the dark. You are clueless, Potter.” He enunciated firmly, causing Jaimee to sputter in indignation.

“B—But...I—”

Kingsley chuckled, gesturing for the other Aurors to move on ahead without him before turning back to give her a grin. “I don’t mean to be harsh, Harry. And I didn’t mean stupid. I meant... You’re kind of ignorant. You see...We Aurors are more than just the best fighters... It takes so much more than that. Aurors are always trained to be keenly observant – constantly on the look out for the smallest things, the smallest deception taking place. Call it a kind of skilled paranoia, if you will...” He began, looking impatient as he checked his watch.

“I know that! I can—”

“—to be an Auror is like having another pair of eyes on the back of your head. You need a sharp perception and awareness, Potter...You need, as Alastor Moody once said, constant vigilance and to always be on your guard. Frankly, you don’t have that.” He finished bluntly, waiting for her reaction.

Hearing this, Harry's adamant face fell and she looked desolately at him in question. "So...What do I do then? How can I improve on my awareness more?" She asked with a sigh.

Kingsley gave her an encouraging pat on the back again, looking amused. "Unfortunately, that is a skill that cannot be taught in the classroom. Why don't you ask some of your more observant friends to help you? I'll give you some time to improve on that." He told her, giving her a grin.

Before she could ask anything else, the Head Auror had sauntered off towards the Headmaster's office to floo back to the Ministry, leaving Jaimee alone with her thoughts and disappointment.

Sighing heavily, she tucked her failed grading sheet back into her bag and began walking off towards her next class in silence, pausing every now and then to wince and discreetly adjust the bandages wrapped around her chest.

Once she got to her Transfigurations classroom, she took the seat beside Hermione near the front of the class, folded her hands onto the table and rested her forehead against them in exhaustion as they waited for the rest of their classmates to arrive.

After a good couple of minutes, she caught a whiff of a familiar, enticing scent and she looked up just in time to see Draco striding into the classroom, Crabbe and Goyle at his heels. Seeing her looking at him, he quirked one corner of his lips into a sexy smirk, instantly causing Jaimee to redden and tear her gaze away in embarrassment.

Merlin, he smells so good... Like a mixture of pine and vanilla...I wonder if he uses cologne or he really does smell like that...She wondered to herself, wincing afterward in realization of her own raunchy thoughts and shaking her head furiously to clear the thoughts away.

As though he heard her musings, Draco kept his smirk in place and strode over to the unknowing girl, bending down low to whisper something into her ear. "Mmm... Looking hot today, Potter...You look

so good, I could bite you.” He murmured in a low, predatory whisper, causing the Gryffindor to jump in surprise when she had felt him nibble discreetly on her ear.

When she made no attempt to push him away, he rested both his hands on her table and leaned down closer so that his next words weren’t heard by Ron or Hermione beside them. “I gather you’ll look a lot better wearing my shirt...And nothing else, if you know what I mean.” He whispered darkly into her ear, causing Jaimee’s cheeks to flush in intense arousal at his words.

Fighting the wave of heated shivers running up and down her spine, she finally moved away from him and looked away as Draco gave a low chuckle and took the seat in front of her – almost as though in a deliberate attempt to tease her with his scent and presence for the rest of the class.

Jaimee glared at him with narrowed eyes and promptly hurled the piece of paper she had crumpled into her hand at the back of his head. Without turning around, Draco reached behind him and easily caught the paper in his hand, smirking as he turned around and easily tossed it back at her and managed to hit her squarely on the face.

“Why you slimy, perverted—”

The idle threat died on Harry’s lips as Professor McGonagall walked briskly into the room, signaling the formal start of their lesson for that day.

“Take out your textbooks. And turn to page six hundred and seventy six. We shall be beginning with Animagus Transformations today. Well at least for those who have not taken the advanced Animagus class taught by the Ministry last year, that is.” She began, looking pointedly at Draco, Harry and several other students.

“For those of you who have already completed your Animagus transformations, I will be giving you a different lesson for today so please wait for further instructions. The rest of you, listen carefully for this lesson is very advantageous.”



Jaimee eventually tuned out the rest of McGonagall's lecture, yawning to herself and lazily flipping the pages of her textbook as she began to lose herself in her own thoughts. Watching curiously as Hermione cast a spell on herself to determine which animal she would assume, she smiled in amusement when the Head Girl had briefly taken on the form of a white dove for a split second before reverting back to human form.

Beside her, Jaimee chuckled when Ron likewise took on the form of a large, red fox. Once he had reassumed his human form, he turned irritated eyes to Harry over his not-so-manly Animagus but the girl merely rolled her eyes and laughed at her friend's reaction.

As soon as all the students had finished determining their forms, McGonagall spoke again – this time directing her attention to the other students in the class. "Now, before I begin teaching you how to transform correctly into your Animagus forms, I would like to call on a volunteer to give a full demonstration in front of the class...Perhaps...Mister Malfoy?" She looked pointedly at the Head Boy in question, raising her eyebrows expectantly.

Draco looked slightly irritated at having been called but stood up nonetheless and walked over to the front of the class. He met Jaimee's curious glance with a smirk before looking up at McGonagall and waited for her signal.

Once the Professor had nodded, Draco raised his wand, pointed it at himself and wordlessly initiated the transformation spell. The rest of the students watched in silent awe as his form was slowly enveloped in a bright white light, blinding the onlookers momentarily before the light cleared and allowed them to see the fierce Siberian wolf with bright silver eyes that was now standing in Draco's place.

As he had seen Draco's Animagus form more than enough times, Blaise merely rolled his eyes and yawned while the rest of the class looked on with avid curiosity, watching as the wolf gave a haughty, indignant growl before arrogantly trotting over to where Jaimee sat and nudged her hand with its nose. In spite of herself, Jaimee chuckled and reached over to scratch the handsome animal behind

its ears, which the wolf returned with an affectionate bark before wagging its tail playfully in appreciation.

Scowling with jealousy, Pansy Parkinson reached over and made to pet the wolf as well but the minute she had taken a step toward it, the wolf immediately gave a fierce, vicious growl and made a violent attempt to bite the offending hand away. Pansy shrieked in alarm and stumbled backwards in fear, causing the rest of the class to burst out laughing.

“That is enough, Mister Malfoy. You may transform back now.” Professor McGonagall announced, hiding her own amused smile at the scene. At her voice, Draco easily morphed himself back to normal, picking himself off the floor and settling himself back down onto his seat.

“Alright, now that we have seen how a proper transformation takes place, we will begin today’s lesson with a proper introduction as to what takes place within one’s form during an Animagus transformation. From the incantation of the spell, a witch or wizard will—”

Once again, Jaimee began tuning out the Professor’s lecture and instead, found herself staring openly at Draco for the remainder of the class instead. She watched silently as the Slytherin began taking down the notes from the lecture in rapt attention. Unaware of her own staring, Harry also noted the way Draco’s eyes darkened into gray whenever he was deep in thought or how much raw sex appeal he exuded just in the simple way he carried himself through his movements.

Blushing to herself, she watched him stroke his chin in thought and her eyes eventually glazed over in desire when he bent down to write something in his notebook, causing several strands of blonde hair fell into his eyes.

I wonder if he’ll ever love me the same way I love him...I’m just a prize to him, aren’t I? She thought sadly, sighing to herself and watching as Draco turned to smirk briefly at Blaise’s quip next to him before shaking his head and turning back to his notes.

Maybe it's time you figured the answer to that question out for yourself, Harry. Another voice that sounded suspiciously like her former male self urged inside her head, drowning out the meek female voice that had spoken and filling her ears with a sense of aggressive decisiveness.

Are you crazy?! That'll leave me right in the open! He'll—

Tss! So? You're the only one thinking too much about the situation, he won't interpret it as 'that'! Just ask him out! You owe him a date, remember? The male voice inside her head spoke up again, interrupting the female voice once more.

Then, snapping out of her senses, she shook her head frantically in an attempt to block out both voices, desperately attempting to reclaim her sanity.

"Good Merlin, I'm hearing voices inside my head. I've really got to get some rest...All this pressure is driving me crazy." She muttered under her breath, burying her face into her hands.

"—alright then, you may all go. Class is dismissed!"

Blinking in surprise at how she had managed to tune out the entire lesson, Jaimee sputtered in disbelief. She looked up and was surprised, however, to see that Draco had already gone from his seat and was now exiting the classroom with Blaise toward the Great Hall.

"Malfoy!"

Hastily shoving her books and parchment messily back into her bag, Jaimee tore out of the room after him, pointedly ignoring Ron and Hermione's inquiring voices behind her. She immediately spotted the Head Boy a couple of meters in front of her a small group of Slytherins and she was about to race toward him when a loud voice suddenly echoed from the other end of the corridor, causing all the students to stop and turn around in shock.

"Jillian Aimee Potter! We challenge you to a magical combat!"

“Oh great...” Jaimee groaned loudly, smacking her hand loudly against her forehead before turning around and searching for the figure of her first challenger. To her surprise, she saw not one but five green-robed students making their way over to her in a perfect synch, an unrecognizable badge on their uniforms.

“All of you?! Who the bloody hell are you guys, anyway?” She demanded rudely, her stance tense and her hand ghosting over the wand in her pocket as she watched them approach her, oblivious to the shocked staring of the other seventh years who were watching.

One of the men – the one with the brightest colored robes – smiled cordially at her, bowing down in respect and planting a kiss on the back of her hand. “We are Daniel Alverton and—”

“Scratch that! I don’t bloody care who you guys are! Where are you from and what the bloody hell do you want?!” Harry growled angrily, shoving his hand away.

She didn’t bother to look at the other students behind him, keeping her attention solely on Daniel and taking a step away from the group in suspicion.

Daniel grinned and gestured to the badge on his robes.

“We are from the noble private academy of Sapientia...And we come here today to challenge you to a magical combat. We suppose we can get to the formalities of this meeting later. We gather it is important to defeat you first?” He asked casually, raising an arrogant eyebrow.

Jaimee sneered at his cocky attitude, finally drawing her wand out of her pocket. “I can take on all of you any day, you prick.” She growled, ignoring the gasps and murmuring of her classmates. Unfortunately, she remained oblivious to Hermione’s pale face or Ron’s wide eyes as their gazes fell upon the other students behind Daniel in shock.

“Potter! Are you purposely being daft or are you pretending to?!”

Another voice had suddenly spoken up behind her, causing Jaimee to whirl around in surprise and recognition just in time to see Draco striding up to the scene, stopping just a couple of meters away from her and pointing frantically to the four figures behind Daniel.

Jaimee raised a single eyebrow in confusion, turning from Daniel's smirking face to Draco's panicked expression. "What are you talking about? He looks pretty harmless to me—"

"You bumbling, clueless idiot! Would you look behind you?! The bloody git is a Multiplexus!" Draco finally exploded, shoving past some of the other students and stopping beside Hermione, allowing her to see the expression of exasperated irritation on his face.

Multiplexus...Multiplexus...Now where did I hear that before? Multiplexus... A very rare wizard born with the natural ability to magically create near perfect replicas of himself which move as an extension of his will...Fuck!

At this realization, Jaimee's eyes finally widened and she whirled around just in time to see the four students behind Daniel beginning to swarm around her in a tight circle. She felt the color drain out of her face when she finally looked up at their faces and noticed that they were completely identical to Daniel's own sneering expression, mirroring the dangerous gleam in the boy's eyes.

"Why do you think he kept referring to himself as 'we', you clueless git?! That was a clear sign of a Multiplexus! How did you ever manage to defeat the dark lord?!" Draco snapped angrily at her again from the watching crowd and at that, Jaimee glared at him in frustration.

"Shut up, Malfoy! You're not helping!"

Daniel sneered wider at their argument and began bowing to her to initiate the combat.

"This is still within the definition of a fair fight, we presume? We have read the contract that your godfather drafted out – it specifies that you are only to fight one bachelor at a time. Well...We are one bachelor...

We just happen to be a Multiplexus.” He drawled simply, chuckling at the irate expression on the Gryffindor’s face.

“Like I said, I’ll take you on any day you cheating scum!” She growled back, her form slightly tense in nervousness as she watched his replicas circling her in predatory fashion, all of which were chuckling in the same way Daniel was from he watched a couple of feet away

“Yes...Perhaps you can...But the question is...Can you take us all at the same time?”

Hearing the finality of his voice, Jaimee instantly stiffened as one of the replicas behind her had seized her from behind and grabbed her by her neck, hurling her towards the floor. Twisting herself out of his grasp, she ducked another arm from the replica to her right and began running as fast as she could towards the outside of the castle, ignoring the surprised shouting and cheering of many of the watching students she passed in the corridors.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck!” She cursed repeatedly to herself as she heard the five pairs of footsteps running after her along with several more from the curious students who were desperately trying to follow the proceedings of the fight.

When she reached the castle entrance, she ducked just in time as one of Daniel’s replicas had aimed a rather powerful hex at her and ended up smashing a nearby statue instead. Hastily inspecting her surroundings, Harry caught sight of the nearby narrow corridor outside the castle and an idea finally popped into her head.

With renewed vigor, she blocked another onslaught of punches from another pair of replicas and whirled on her heel, hurriedly heading toward the narrow corridor in panic. As she turned the corner, she caught sight of Ron and Hermione trying to keep up with the fight, both teenagers with worried frowns on their faces.

“The corridor, Harry—”

“I know!” She yelled back before Hermione’s words gave her plan away and she gave the girl a reassuring wink before finally racing into

the corridor and stopping at the very end, turning around to smirk triumphantly at her approaching opponents.

Daniel was the last to arrive on the scene and upon seeing Jaimee at the very end of the outside corridor, he merely raised an eyebrow. “Nowhere else to run now, Miss Potter... You’ll learn that marrying us is not as bad as you might think it is. It’s time for your defeat now.” He drawled, chuckling as one by one, his replicas surged forward toward the smirking Gryffindor.

Fortunately, as the corridor was far too narrow for more than two to approach her at the same time, Jaimee managed to duck and twist her away around their administrations one by one, ending her move with a very leveled stunning spell that sent one replica flying into another and knocking the other down. Growling in frustration, the replicas picked themselves up off the floor and lunged for her again but they were easily knocked back as she turned and leveled them with an uppercut to the jaw, sending them crashing into each other once more within the cramped space.

As the replicas were not as bright as Daniel himself, this process repeated for several moments – each one racing toward her and being knocked backward with a stunning spell into his comrades behind him until eventually all four replicas had been exhausted and collapsed – one by one – down onto the floor in defeat.

Once she had cleared an open pathway through his replicas towards Daniel – who at the moment was sputtering in disbelief and outrage at having been outsmarted so easily – Jaimee smirked widely and raced forward toward him, turning on her heel just in time and landing her foot across his jaw in a powerful kick just as she let out a simultaneous enunciation of –

“STUPEFY!”

The students who had been watching cheered and catcalled loudly as the now unconscious Multiplexus was sent hurling backwards away from her, crashing noisily into the suit of armor behind him and sending the decoration scattering into bits of metal across the floor.

She barely heard the loud cheers and whistling that had erupted around her, her muscles tense and ready to snap into action as she awaited any further movements from Daniel or his replicas.

Amidst the loud whispers and murmuring, she kept her eyes trained on the Multiplexus' still form – waiting for any further signs of movement before she let her guard down. When she was sure the boy was completely out cold, she finally let out a huge breath of relief and relaxed her fighting stance – her shoulders slumping with exhaustion and her chest heaving for breath.

“That was bloody brilliant, Harry! You sent that stupid multiplexus' arse to hell and back!” Ron exclaimed as he rushed forward and caught the girl before she collapsed, giving her a proud, encouraging pat on the back.

Harry managed a weak smile, watching as Hermione joined them and handed her back the bag she had dropped before the fight. “You should really be more observant next time, Harry...But nevertheless, good work on your fighting. It was very smart of you to lead him down a narrow corridor so you could fight his replicas one by one.” She commented, causing Ron to snort in derision.

“Smart? It was bloody brilliant, it was!” He corrected her, supporting an exhausted Jaimee back towards the castle. Glaring at the watching younger years who had stopped to watch them, Ron gave a low growl and sent them a glare that would have made Snape cower in fear.

“Oi, you stupid children! What the bloody hell are you all staring at?! Go back to your miserable little lives and leave Harry alone!” Ron yelled out, causing the younger years to squeak in fright and scatter into separate directions.

Once they had gone, Harry gave Ron a grateful smile, laughing in both amusement and appreciation “Thanks, Ron. I'm fine, really... I just need to catch my breath for a moment—”

“Potter!”



All three Gryffindors froze and turned around to see Draco walking up to them with an arrogant smirk, his gaze directed towards Jaimee's wary features and a wand held tightly in his hand.

Seeing this, Jaimee stiffened in anticipation and she felt her friends' hands tighten protectively around her arm, all three Gryffindors watching as the Slytherin approached them with an unreadable glint in his eyes.

Once he reached them, Ron's eyes narrowed and he gave Draco a contemptuous glare. "What do you want, Malfoy? If you want to challenge Harry already, you'll have to wait. She can't fight fairly in her current condition and—"

Draco ignored him and, without saying a word, pointed the wand towards Harry. Ron and Hermione instantly tensed and shot their own wands up in alarm, causing the Slytherin to roll his eyes at the horrified expressions on their faces.

Is he going to challenge me already? I'm not exactly in the right condition to fight, can I beat him? Do I want even want to? What if he loses, I don't know what I'd—

It took Jaimee several seconds of blinking up at him in confused thought before she finally realized that Draco wasn't actually pointing the wand at her but was actually offering it to her in silence. Studying the expression on his face, she raised an eyebrow and finally looked down at his hand, her eyes widening when she recognized the wand he held was, in fact, her own.

"My wand! I must have dropped it after the fight...I—I—" She stuttered in embarrassment, shakily taking it from the Slytherin and tucking it back into her robes. Ron and Hermione both reddened at that but stepped back and lowered their own wands from Draco's face, ignoring the Head Boy's amused chuckle at their reactions.

Harry, you idiot... He doesn't want to challenge you yet. You just made a fool out of yourself! Jaimee heard the male voice inside her head again and blushed in humiliation, trying her best to give the smirking Slytherin a polite smile of gratitude.

“Th—Thank you, Draco. I—”

“Don’t mention it. See you around, Potter.” Was all he said, giving her a flirtatious wink before turning to walk away, leaving Jaimee staring after him and sputtering in a mixture of disappointment, shock and embarrassment.

Stupid git! Isn’t he even going to challenge me?! What game does he think he’s playing at now?! She suddenly raged in silence, unknowingly pouting at his reaction and glaring darkly after his retreating form.

She pointedly ignored Hermione’s incessant tugging on her arm and inwardly debated with herself whether she should run after him or not. “Come on, Harry... Let’s go eat dinner. I’m starving and you need to regain your strength.” Hermione urged, trying drag the other girl away but Harry shrugged her arm off.

“You guys go on ahead, I’ll follow in awhile.” She excused herself, giving the other girl a brief smile before she turned and raced after Draco in a huff, leaving Hermione and Ron gaping after her in shocked silence.

Once she had reached him, she stopped and crossed her arms over her chest, setting her face into a displeased scowl.

“Draco!”

Three...Two...One...

“Draco!”

Hook, line, and sinker.

Draco smirked gleefully to himself for a second before setting his face into a nonchalantly stoic expression and turned around, meeting Jaimee’s scowling face with a single raised eyebrow.

“Oh, so it’s ‘Draco’ now is it, Potter? Well then, ‘Harry’...What can I do for you? Was there anything you wanted?” He asked in a casual tone, hiding a smile when he saw the flurry of uncertain emotions racing across the Gryffindor’s beautiful face.

The expression on Jaimee’s face looked like a cross between her wanting to either jump him or to run away and Draco sincerely hoped it was going to be the former. In any case, he gave her another smirk and began tapping his foot impatiently, waiting for her response.

When after a couple more minutes, she looked as though she wouldn’t be able to say anything, Draco finally sighed and checked his watch for effect. “Harry, as much as I like staring at you...And believe me, I do—” He emphasized, smirking as he let his eyes travel hungrily over her slender frame, causing the girl to shift uncomfortably.

“—I do have Head Boy duties to attend to. Your little fight awhile ago has already created a mess in the castle and quite a stir among the younger students and I have to attend to that...So whatever is on your mind, do tell me now.” He continued in a low drawl, causing Jaimee to blush darker in uncertainty.

She took a deep breath and looked right up at him, her hands fidgeting nervously as she spoke in a rushed, shaky whisper.

“DracowillyougotoHogsmeadewithmethisFriday?”

He almost didn’t hear nor understand her sentence but Draco knew exactly what she wanted. That still didn’t stop him from tormenting the beautiful girl further and wanting her to repeat her question louder.

Preventing a triumphant smirk, Draco blinked and cocked his eyebrow higher in feigned confusion.

“Excuse me, Potter...Come again...?”

Harry found herself blushing at the sexual innuendo in his words and shifted uncomfortably again, her eyes dropping shyly to the floor and allowing the Slytherin a clear view her long, elegant eyelashes.

In spite of himself, Draco felt his smirk fading at the girl's adorable ministrations and he had to fight the urge to bury his lips in hers, waiting instead for her to look up at him again.

Once she did, she managed a small, helpless smile – one of her shoulders lifting up in a half-shrug before she spoke. “Draco, will you go to Hogsmeade with me this Friday? You know...Just to...Hang out?” She asked awkwardly, biting her lip as she waited for his reaction.

Draco grinned widely, his eyes twinkling in mirth.

“Are you asking me out on a date, Potter? Have you forgotten that respectable debutantes do not ask men out on dates? Or does your new...attire...qualify you as having male privileges now...?” He teased, chuckling in amusement as he let his eyes trail down her unbelievably sexy male uniform again.

She glared at him, her cheeks flushed with angry embarrassment. “Well if you're going to be that way about it and make fun of me, then forget it!” She huffed, narrowing her eyes before turning on her heel and attempting to walk away but she stopped when she felt two strong arms wrap possessively around her waist, yanking her back against him.

Melting against his warm, chiseled frame, she bit her lip again when he turned her around and allowed her to see the amused smile he had on his face. His eyes still tinged with laughter, he leaned down and pressed his lips briefly against hers, causing her breath to hitch into her throat.

When he finally pulled back a couple of seconds later, Jaimee's face was flushed with desire and her eyes were slightly disoriented. She blinked at him in an effort to regain her senses and seeing the expression on her face, Draco gave her a smug smile.

Without saying anything else, he released her and gave her another smirk before making to walk back down the corridor towards the Slytherin common room again and leaving her glaring speechlessly at

his retreating form in shock. Before Jaimee could sputter after him to demand his answer, he turned around and gave her one last smile.

“Maybe...”

With that, he gave her a knowing wink and sauntered off, his robes billowing elegantly behind him. Unknown to Draco, however, Jaimee was still watching him walk away with a fond, helpless smile on her face.

She shook her head at herself, laughing as she turned and began heading back toward the Great Hall.

“He is such a conceited prat...”

A/N: Sorry! Not much Draco/Harry action in this chapter (or any action from anyone for that matter) but this one had to be done for the plot to move along! I needed to show the important events that needed to happen following the debutante ball...as well as some of Harry's classes. \*runs and hides from angry readers\* Meeep! In any case, you saw a bit of jealous!Harry in this chapter didn't you? \*giggle\* And a bit of lovesick!Harry as well. It's not just Draco anymore. I promise you that the next chapter will contain their date and a bit more fluff moments from our favorite couple!

Now, regarding other matters – I'm actually curious. Do any of you think I should pair up Byron with anyone? His character seemed to have taken on a life of its own and I gathered from your reviews that a lot of you liked him too. \*giggle\* In any case, do you guys think I should pair him up with anyone? And if so, who? Guy or girl, it doesn't really matter. \*wink\*

Anyway, send me your thoughts alright? Oh and about the loving/falling in love confusion – don't worry! It will all be given light and further explanation in the next chapter, that I promise you! Again, sorry for the lack of romance here and I promise to make it up to all of you soon by making Anton scarce in the next few chapters. That should be good news, huh? \*wink\*

Lastly – Yay for Harry and her cross-dressing tendencies! \*laughs\*

PLEASE REVIEW! \*wink\*

## Chapter 21 – Love and Silliness

Harry grunted as she hoisted her school bag up higher on her shoulder and made to hurry after Ron and the other Gryffindor boys, all of which were making their way towards the dungeons for Potions. She scowled and tugged impatiently at the binds strapping her breasts together before forcing herself to walk faster.

“Wait up!”

Giving her an amused grin, they stopped and waited for her to catch up. Seeing the irritated expression on her face, Ron ventured a guess as to her current condition. “What’s with you? You look really stressed out.” He commented, watching as the Gryffindor girl heaved herself over to them.

She gave him a dirty look, ignoring the way Seamus and Dean were cuddling each other behind them. “Of course, I’m stressed! Midterms are next week and I’m barely finished with all the requirements for Snape! Stupid sodding bastard... I swear, he makes it his personal mission to make my life miserable.” She muttered, rolling her eyes.

Ron shrugged, giving her a pointed look. “You’re probably stressed out because you take his class way too seriously. You’re almost as bad as Hermione these days...” He told her and Jaimee gave him another angry glare in response.

“I have to! I need a high grade in Potions if I want to get into the Ministry of Magic as an Auror! It’s bad enough I have Kingsley up my arse about how ignorant I am, I can’t afford to get low in Potions too.” She grumbled as she and Ron began to follow Dean, Seamus and Neville down the corridor.

At this, Ron gave her a sympathetic smile. “Well, I’m sure Hermione will help you with all the workload later on. She always does. Hold on a tick, I need to go to the bathroom.” He suddenly interrupted himself as they passed by the male bathrooms.

Harry blinked and set her own bag down, nodding in agreement. “Now that you mention it, me too. I’ll come with you.” She said,

making to follow him. She had just about clasped the knob of the entrance to the bathroom a couple of steps ahead of Ron when Neville reached a hand forward and clasped it around her robes, keeping her in place.

“And where do you think you’re going, Harry?” He asked pointedly, causing the girl to look up and eventually see Ron, Seamus and Dean’s wide, disbelieving faces at her.

“What?!”

She snapped, looking irritated and shrugging Neville’s hand off but he shook his head firmly at her. “Were you just about to follow Ron into the male bathroom, Jaimee?!” He admonished, giving her a pointed glare but she looked confused and gave a shrug.

“What? I am a guy! You’re not actually suggesting I go into the female bathrooms, now are you?” She asked incredulously and at her words, Ron looked at her as though she had grown an extra head.

“Are you insane?! Of course we are! It’s bad enough we have to share a dormitory with you now but now we have to go to the bathroom together too?! You’re a bloody girl, Harry! It’s weird!” He blurted out, his cheeks tinged with red.

Jaimee laughed at the expression on his face, shaking her head in amusement. “Well none of you seemed to find it weird last night when I was going to change and you asked if you could ‘see it’. Now by ‘it’, were you referring to my breasts, my arse or my—”

“Stop it! Shut up, I was just curious!” Ron interrupted, his ears bright red in embarrassment just as Seamus erupted into a round of hearty laughter.

“I don’t mind you sharing a dormitory with us, Harry.” Seamus told her, winking and Dean – used to his antics at this point – simply rolled his eyes. Jaimee also rolled her eyes at him and didn’t reply.

“Ron’s right you know. Cross dressing as a male and strapping down your breasts hardly qualifies you as a man by society’s standards,



Harry. You're going to have to use the girl's bathroom from now on." Dean told her, shaking his head and she was just about to give an angry retort at this when a strangely familiar voice called behind her, causing her to turn around in surprise.

"Miss Potter!"

"Miss Potter? Who calls you that – " Ron turned around and stopped as he caught sight of a rather handsome, green-robed student making his way toward them from the end of the hallway. The boy had pale, distinctly aristocratic features and jet-black hair that was swept back neatly from his face. A mischievous, otherwise smug grin was on his face as he walked towards them with swift, confident strides. Turning to Jaimee, Ron was surprised to find the look of surprised recognition on the other Gryffindor's face.

"Byron Malfoy... What in Merlin's name are you doing here?" She asked, blinking at him and trying not to let her surprise show when the metamorphagus reached her and gave her a cordial bow, reaching over and planting a gentlemanly kiss on the back of her hand.

Hearing her words, Byron gave her a wide grin again and chose not answer her question. Instead, he turned his attention to the gaping boys behind her and gave them a curt nod of acknowledgement.

"Aren't you going to introduce me to your friends?" He asked charmingly, smirking as he notice the way both Dean and Seamus' eyes had roamed up and down his form. Jaimee nodded briefly and turned to the gaping Gryffindors, keeping her voice even as she spoke.

"Guys, this is Byron Malfoy...He's...Draco's cousin. We met at the debutante ball last weekend. Byron, this is my best friend Ron, and my dorm mates – Seamus, Dean, and Neville." She introduced, watching as the boys engaged formalities.

At hearing his relation to the Slytherin Head Boy, Seamus' eyes widened and he looked at Byron with renewed curiosity. "Are you

really Draco's cousin? I've never seen a Malfoy with black hair before. Wow, I guess you do have the same chin and eyes—"

"Draco's eyes are purely silver, Seamus...Byron's are more of a bluish gray." Harry instantly corrected him and as soon as the words left her mouth, she blushed and coughed to hide her embarrassment – purposely ignoring Byron's teasing smile.

"Don't forget I'm a metamorphagus, you know. I can change them to whatever color I want - even my cousin's 'sexy' shade of silver. Look." He blinked once and instantly, his eyes were the same shade of silver as Draco's own eyes, unknowingly raising Jaimee's ire at his implied teasing as she gave him a glare.

"You didn't answer my question Malfoy. What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be in – what's the name of –"

"Sapientia's, yes. I am supposed to be there actually but I merely came here to drop by on my cousins and check how they were doing. Anton, particularly seeing as Lucius wants me to make sure he stays out of trouble." He told her amiably, blinking again and this time settling his eyes to the color of golden brown. He smiled and waved courteously in farewell to the other Gryffindors as Harry nodded them to go on ahead.

Dean, Seamus and Neville all returned her nod and went off while Ron stayed behind, listening to their conversation. "Well that stupid half-breed better stay out of my path if he knows what's good for him. I can't believe I actually liked him." Jaimee muttered, looking angry with herself.

Byron chuckled, shaking his head before answering. "Well Anton is pretty handsome at first glance. Anyway, the reason I came here is that—"

"Hold on, you're not about to challenge Harry are you? Because I can tell you, it's rather a bad time considering—"

Byron simply held up a hand to silence Ron's outburst, causing the redhead to glare at him in dislike but shut his mouth with a loud snap.

Once he did, Byron turned once more to a confused Jaimee, who was now aiming a look of suspicion at him.

“As beautiful and utterly gorgeous I think you are, Miss Jaimee... I’m not here to challenge you. I would never do that to Draco, I respect him too much.” He told her, giving her a flirtatious wink otherwise. “Then again, that’s just another way of me saying that I personally think you would kick my arse to oblivion and I’d rather not lose my male pride by attempting to fight you.” He kidded, causing Jaimee to laugh in spite of herself.

“In any case, I actually just want to talk to you about something important. If that’s okay...? It will only take about ten minutes of your time.” He offered, watching as Ron instantly began shaking his head at her and attempting to pull her off.

Jaimee, however, shrugged off his attempts at warning her and gave him a patronizing look. “Alright. So talk then, Malfoy.” She agreed, giving the Malfoy son an expectant glare.

Byron shifted uncomfortably under her gaze, looking from her to Ron in slight annoyance. “Uhm...I meant...If I could talk to you...alone. To be honest, it isn’t me who really wants to talk to you, Jaimee...I’m just the messenger.” He told her, jerking his thumb in the direction of a nearby empty classroom.

At this, Jaimee’s left eyebrow quirked up in both suspicion and curiosity and from the look of uncertain fear in Ron’s eyes, she could tell her best friend felt the same. Nevertheless, she nodded to his request and gestured for Ron to go on ahead, giving him a wary glance.

“If I’m not back in class by fifteen minutes, come and look for me.” She told him and to this, Ron nodded and walked off, rushing towards their Potions classroom just as the school bell rang to signal the start of the period.

Sighing at how she would evidently be late for Potions and at how Snape would most probably make her pay for it, she shook her head and followed a whistling Byron to the empty classroom at the end of

the hallway, ignoring the strange looks they were receiving from the passing students.

Once they reached the room and Byron had gently shut the door behind them, Jaimee whirled around and instantly widened her eyes in surprise. Looking out in silence from one of the room's small windows overlooking the garden, she caught sight of a handsome, silver-haired man in expensive robes of blue. The man seemed to carry himself with the easy grace and aura of a powerful patriarch and he exuded an overpowering atmosphere of pride and arrogance – something even Jaimee certainly did not fail to notice.

“Who—”

The question died on her lips as the man slowly turned around, allowing Jaimee to see his mocking, condescending sneer and the cold, unyielding expression on his steely silver eyes.

Those eyes... They're scarily like Draco's...He's...

A small gasp must have escaped her lips because as though he had read her thoughts, the man sneered again and nodded curtly to her in acknowledgment, making his way over to her in silent, elegant strides.

“I am Lawrence Edward Malfoy. I am Draco's grandfather...As well as former head of the illustrious Malfoy family.” He introduced himself briefly, his eyes seeming to swoop down on Jaimee's shaking form as they seemed to inspect her from head to toe in distaste, making her feeling like she was a disgusting bug he was analyzing under a microscope.

His eyes took in her male uniform, her haphazardly worn blouse – which unfortunately was no longer white due to the syrup stains she had gotten on herself during breakfast that morning, her dirt-stained pants and her uncombed hair, all the while looking dissatisfied. Her cheeks reddened in slight indignation when he eyed the single silver earring in her left ear and his lips curled into another sneer of derision, looking completely disapproving of her appearance.

“It appears gossip seems to exaggerate certain things. You are certainly not the beautiful woman all the tabloids praise you to be. I can’t imagine what my grandson sees in you.” He drawled mockingly, looking disdainful and at his words, Byron had to level Jaimee with a warning stare to keep the Gryffindor from blurting out the string of insults that were aching to come out of her mouth.

“Pardon me, Mister Malfoy but I hardly think you had Byron call me in here – in the middle of my classes, no less – to look at me in disdain and lecture me about my appearance. What is it you want?” She asked bluntly and though Byron looked slightly apprehensive at the tone of her voice, Lawrence seemed to find her rudeness amusing.

Walking over to her, he simply nodded once and reached for something in the pocket of his robes.

“Very well...I will get straight to the point.”

Harry, thinking he was reaching for his wand, was on her guard immediately and stiffened in anticipation. Her suspicions, however, soon melted away into confusion when Lawrence finally took his hand out and nestled between his fingers, was a small, rectangular slip of paper.

Ignoring the Gryffindor’s confusion and uncertainty, the elder Malfoy reached over and handed the slip of paper to her in cold silence, watching as she took it with shaking hands and held it up closer to her face.

Squinting her eyes, the emerald orbs widened in a mixture of shock, disbelief, and indignant outrage as soon as she was able to decipher the words written on it.

It was a Gringotts check.

A check for 500,000 galleons worth of money.

And it was addressed to her.

“What is the meaning of this, Mister Malfoy?” She asked quietly, setting the check down and turning once more to the elder man with narrowed eyes. Behind her, Byron seemed to be shifting uncomfortably, unsure of what to say about his grandfather’s actions.

Lawrence turned and regarded her with a cold sneer, his eyes narrowing as they pierced through her form. “Is it not obvious, Miss Potter? It is a check for 500,000 galleons – a staggering amount of money only half of the amount I will be giving you if you finally make this easier for all of us and marry my grandson within the shortest possible time.” He told her harshly, failing to see Harry’s cheeks color in insult.

“Wh-what—”

“Now...Should you agree to marry Draco, I will bestow that amount to you without hesitation. And after your marriage, you will receive another 500,000 galleons for your efforts. Surely you cannot refuse this offer? After all, all women are the same anyway – wanting nothing but money from my poor sons and grandsons every single time.” Lawrence drawled further, turning around so that he was once more looking out the window into the Hogwarts gardens.

Behind him, Jaimee was positively seething and shaking with anger – the check slowly being crushed into a tiny ball in her fist while her eyes were flashing dangerously like lightning bolts. Seeing her form, Byron took a step back from her and continued to watch the proceedings of the encounter from a safer distance.

Mistaking the silence in the room as Jaimee’s shock, Lawrence seemed to chuckle in mockery and shake his head in amusement. “Well? You can’t seem to speak, can you? You seem to have put my grandson through long enough courtship, you see... I don’t know why but he won’t seem to have any other woman but you. So I thought it necessary to make you see reason.” He commented casually, still chuckling.

Hearing the condescending tone of his voice, Jaimee finally spoke up and this time, even Lawrence could not deny the heavy anger intermingled with her shaking voice.

“You’re disgusting.”

“What?!” Lawrence blinked and whirled around in shock and he was instantly met with Harry’s own angry sneer directed at him. She walked over to him, the check he had offered her crushed into a tight, angry ball in her fingers.

“You rich pureblooded scums...You think that everyone...and everything...can be bought with your money. You think that just because you’re rich and your blood is pure, you own the damn world and everyone else in it! Well I tell you, Mister Lawrence Malfoy, you’re a sad, disgusting man.” She spat angrily at him, causing the elder Malfoy’s eyes to narrow dangerously at her insult.

Behind her, he thought he caught sight of Byron smiling in surprised admiration at Jaimee but he paid his grandson no attention, the expression on his face disbelieving as he watched her continue to speak.

“You actually think you’ll be making Draco happy by buying his wife for him? You actually think that this is what he wants? You sicken me! You Malfoys are so bloody stuck-up and conceited that you don’t even realize the feelings of other people – including your own children!” She raged out further, her form trembling with suppressed emotions.

At this, Lawrence had to hide a wince but he felt his own disdain of her slowly melting away into a reluctant admiration and in spite of himself, the corner of his lips began to quirk into a small, amused smirk. He had never been lectured by someone younger before, and he felt that it was undoubtedly a new experience for him.

“You care about nothing but your bloody traditions and wealth and prestige! You impose perfection on everything – including your children – and you force them to adhere to your demands! You don’t realize that your children are human! Take Draco for example – do you not realize how much you’ll end up hurting him if he finds out you did this?!” She seethed, her shoulders rising up and down in heavy breathing.

Finally, she looked directly into his emotionless eyes and walked right up to him, keeping the check clenched firmly in her fist. After a long moment of staring at him in disbelief, she sneered and she shook her head in disgust.

“Well...If that is really how it is in your family, Mister Malfoy... I think I’ll pass. In fact, here is what I think of your disgusting little check.” She snapped and with that, she walked over to the window behind him and hurled the crumpled check out the window, finally causing Byron to grin very widely behind her.

When Lawrence had recovered from his initial shock, he stood there blinking in disbelief and watched as she turned around again and gave him one last look of defiance. “If I decide to marry your grandson, Mister Malfoy – Or anyone for that matter – it will be because I love him for who he is. And by that, I mean everything he is...and everything he’s not. I hope you understand my decision.” She spoke softly this time and with that, she sauntered past him and made her way towards the door.

As she passed Byron, the grinning metamorphagus seemed to cheer and discreetly raised his hand in a high five. Jaimee shook her head but obliged by clapping hers against it in agreement. Sighing, she was just about to exit the room when she heard Lawrence clear his throat loudly behind her, causing her to stop in her tracks.

“Miss Jaimee.”

Shit shit shit shit...What was I thinking getting all high and mighty like that? Why did I say all those things?! She suddenly thought to herself as she heard him, feeling her heart pounding rapidly in her chest. Suddenly feeling nervous about her spontaneous display of emotion, she found herself wishing she could eat her words back as soon as she heard the forbidding hiss in his voice.

Gulping, she steadied her face and turned to look at him, blinking nervously. To her surprise, however, she saw a reluctantly admiring smirk on his face. The elder Malfoy walked over to her and stopped a



couple of inches in front of her trembling form, allowing her to see the amused twinkling in his otherwise cold eyes.

He seemed to stare her down for a long moment, unknowingly making her even more nervous as she fought to keep calm under his steely eyes. After what seemed like hours, the Malfoy patriarch surprised her even further when the smirk on his face slowly transformed into a small, curious smile.

“...Now I understand what my grandson sees in you.” He said softly, chuckling to himself. At this, Jaimee instantly reddened at his words and her wide eyes dropped down to the floor in shock but Lawrence was no longer paying attention. He nodded to Byron, who returned his nod and immediately began gathering their things.

Harry waited awkwardly, her gaze still focused intently on her shoes as Byron helped his grandfather into his coat and handed the older Malfoy back his hat and papers. As they finished and were on their way out, Jaimee finally let out a sigh of relief to herself as she heard the classroom doors being opened.

Unfortunately, her breath was soon sucked sharply back in when she heard Lawrence’s voice speak up again, causing her head to snap back up in surprise and apprehension.

“It seems....you have just earned my respect, Miss Potter...”

Her eyes widened once more and she watched as Lawrence turned and gave her a genuine smile, briefly inclining his hat towards her in a gesture of respect. Byron followed this up with a wide grin and frantic thumbs-up signs at her from behind him, causing Jaimee to finally smile back in spite of herself.

“You are a very...interesting one. I am certain that I will see you again.” With that, he placed his hat back on his head and stormed off with Byron trailing after him, both Malfoys’ footsteps fading off into silence as Jaimee was soon left alone in the classroom to her thoughts.

“Draco, darling! Hogsmeade weekend starts the day after tomorrow. Would you like to accompany me?”

Draco tried not to wince in annoyance as he tried in vain to ignore Pansy’s voice and concentrate on his Potions essay that afternoon. He and Blaise had decided to relax to themselves and spend some time in the Slytherin Common Room with some of their other seventh year Slytherin friends, all of which were cramming or studying for their upcoming midterms.

“I’m busy, Pansy. I already have plans.” He replied curtly, sighing in irritation when he felt Pansy plop herself down on the couch beside him. Blinking in an effort to keep from getting dizzy at the overpowering, saccharine scent of her strong perfume, he turned and met the amused smirks of his fellow male housemates around them.

“Well aren’t you two the sweetest couple? Hey Pans, weren’t you and Draco here like, I don’t know, engaged since you were five?” Theodore Nott asked in amusement and instantly, Draco shook his head in fierce denial.

“We were not! Our families are just good friends, is all! Pansy and I only ever dated once and that was when I was horribly insane.” He growled back and at that, Pansy pouted in dismay and all the other Slytherins laughed at the scene.

“Speaking of families, I thought I saw Byron and your grandfather this morning. What’s happening?” Vincent Crabbe spoke up, causing Draco to look up at him in surprise in suspicion.

“You did? What, were they here to check up on Lorraine and Anton or something?” He asked with narrowed eyes, looking uncertain but Blaise shook his head and shrugged.

“I wouldn’t know. I saw them too and your grandfather seemed pretty intent on something. Anyway, it’s probably nothing... Maybe we’re looking too much into it.” Blaise offered, shrugging once more and Draco could only nod halfheartedly in agreement.

“I suppose—”

“Your cousin Byron is really cute, by the way, Draco. Is he available, by any chance?” Daphne Greengrass spoke up, giggling to herself and immediately Draco scowled at her, looking irritated.

“How should I know? I’m not his bloody keeper! If you want to hook up with a Malfoy, go for Anton! Less time.” He snapped, causing Daphne to redden in embarrassment and the other girls to squeal excitedly amongst themselves.

Blaise smirked at his reaction, shaking his head. “You’re so crabby today, Dray. Anything particular on your mind that’s bothering you?” He asked as he lazily turned a page of his Arithmancy book before lifting his eyes up to stare at his best friend in query.

Draco seemed to growl again, looking annoyed by his question. “You’d be bloody crabby too if your grandfather reduced your damn hunting period by half. I have exactly three months to get a girl—”

Hearing this, a random blonde Slytherin sixth year plopped herself down onto his lap and gave him a suggestive smile. Draco merely stiffened with ire and shoved her off without a second thought, causing the girl to gasp in alarm as she stumbled onto the floor.

“—let me clarify that. I have exactly three months to get my girl to marry me and frankly, I’m not making much progress. Every time I try to approach her, some lame brain idiot challenges her to another stupid magical combat.” He drawled darkly, causing Blaise to laugh at the memory.

“Yeah, like the one this morning. I can’t believe the poor guy actually thought he could defeat her by sending a large basilisk on her – bloke seems to have forgotten she’s a parselmouth.” He recalled, sniggering at the memory.

In spite of himself, Draco began to laugh as well as he remembered what had happened. “Yeah, that’s my Harry alright...” He murmured to himself, a small smile on his face. “She whipped his arse in a matter of ten minutes. Just like all the other stupid morons who

challenged her this week. Including you, Nott.” Draco added with a sneer, causing Theodore to redden at the memory.

“If I remember correctly, you didn’t even last ten minutes... Am I right, Theo?” Gregory Goyle suddenly asked, causing Theodore to growl angrily at him for bringing it up and both Draco and Blaise to sneer.

“Hey, she’s pretty strong for a girl you know. I doubt you would have lasted five minutes fighting her. Or even three.” He mocked the large boy but Goyle simply shrugged at his insult and looked nonchalantly amused.

“Nevertheless, Theo... Goyle’s right. You got yourself pummeled.” Blaise agreed, sniggering and Theodore hurled his notebook at him in annoyance.

“Shut up!”

“Why are you all going crazy about her, anyway? She’s way too skinny for me. I like women who are more filled out. Besides, the fact that she used to be a man kind of irks me.” Goyle pointed out and at his words, his girlfriend – Millicent Bulstrode – smiled smugly and sidled up against him.

“You needn’t be challenging her, anyway...You’ve got me.” She told him and at that, the two snuggled closer together, much to the disgust of everyone else in the room.

“Ugh...Please! Not while I’m in here!” Draco grunted, shaking his head and turning his gaze away from the less than pleasant sight but Goyle should have given him a smug smile. “You’re just jealous, Malfoy. I have my perfect girl and you and Zabini don’t.” He kidded and at that, Draco rolled his eyes and scoffed in disbelief.

“You don’t understand why we’re all going crazy about her? Have you not seen Potter as a female, Goyle? She’s bloody gorgeous! She’s got a body that’s screaming to be shagged! She’s smart, powerful, she has all these bloody titles and ancestral history! She’s everything a pureblooded heir could bloody want!” Malcolm Pellerin suddenly blurted out, causing Draco to growl and level him with a fierce glare.

“You should learn to keep your bloody mouth shut. Don’t talk about my woman like a common tart—”

“She’s hardly yours to claim yet, Draco! Until I see your ring on her finger, she’s up for grabs just like every other girl this season.” Malcolm countered easily, sneering and interrupting his tirade.

“You bastard, I’ll show you to speak with more respect—”

“Draco!”

Hearing the warning in Blaise’s voice, Draco instantly stopped his attempt at rising from his seat and maiming Malcolm. Instead, he turned lazy eyes to his best friend and gave him a sardonic sneer. “I was only protecting my property, Zabini. He should know his place.” He drawled coldly, narrowing his eyes at the other boy in warning.

Malcolm merely rolled his eyes, looking amused. “Why are you so protective of Potter, Draco? She’s just a woman, isn’t she? And she used to be your enemy so the fact that you can dominate her physically now must be a turn-on.” He added, smirking wider.

Draco’s eyes flashed dangerously at his words and his hand twitched for his wand in his robes, wanting to hex the other Slytherin into oblivion. “You son of a bi—”

“Malcolm! Why don’t we go grab some food in the kitchens? I’m kind of hungry. You coming, Pans?” Theodore finally interrupted, smirking at Draco’s irate figure before he beckoned some of the other Slytherins over. The group obliged and stood up, briefly shielding Malcolm from Draco’s sight and escorting the other boy out of the common room before their leader could attack him.

Pansy nodded and took Theodore’s hand with a giggle, briefly waving a flirty farewell to both Blaise and Draco before they left, leaving the two Slytherins alone in the now empty common room. Once they were gone and the door had shut quietly after them, Blaise turned to Draco and shook his head in a mixture of amusement and concern.

“Are you alright, Dray? You seem pretty out of it, this morning. You’ve been staring off into empty space even through most of Potions...What’s really bothering you?” He asked, taking in his friend’s weary features.

“I guess I’m feeling a little pressured right now. I have slightly less than three months to find a way for Harry to marry me and she still doesn’t seem to understand that my intentions are sincere. I feel like I’m bloody getting nowhere with the clueless git. She’s making me go around in circles.” He admitted, causing Blaise’s eyebrows to fuse in curiosity.

“Really? How so?”

Draco allowed a wry smile on his face as he looked up and met Blaise’s gaze with a smirk. “Well for one thing, she isn’t exactly opposed to me physically...If you know what I mean.” He began, smirking wider as he recalled their steamy encounter in the gardens after the debutante ball.

The mere memory of how her luscious body had been pressed so tightly and wantonly against him that night still made him harden in arousal. He shook his head, trying to clear the thoughts away.

“But other than that...I don’t understand why she keeps pushing me away! I mean, I understand that we were rivals for almost seven years now but surely that isn’t the only reason. Is she expecting something from me?” He wondered out loud, sighing and shaking his head in frustration.

“Merlin...And I thought this was going to be easier for me since Harry used to be a guy so she wouldn’t put me through all that weird crap that girls usually make us go through. I thought wrong.” He added as an afterthought, chuckling weakly in helpless amusement.

Blaise looked slightly thoughtful as though he was pondering Draco’s words carefully, his eyebrows fused together in thought. “Maybe not...What did you say to her anyway?” He asked, looking intently at the Head Boy.

Draco raised an eyebrow, trying to remember his words. "I admitted that I was in love with her. But then again, that was probably about the third time I said it to her face and she still brushed me aside. I told her that I respected her and how much I wanted her. Is that...bad?" He asked, looking at Blaise and flinching in irritation when the other boy laughed.

"You told her you wanted her, huh? Draco, you should know by now that in guy talk that just means – 'I want to have sex with you'. Potter was a guy, of course she knew that! How unromantic could you get?" He pointed out bluntly and realizing this, Draco groaned in annoyance with himself.

"But I did—I do want to! I mean—Well, that isn't the point!" He rushed out as he was met with Blaise's sniggers again. "It's just...That wasn't even the important part of what I said! I told her that I was in love with her and that I wanted her for the rest of my life! Isn't that romantic enough?!" He snapped, glaring at Blaise's amused features.

"Don't look at me, I wouldn't know! I didn't exactly have any luck with my own courtship of Granger either. She turned me down flat and berated me about the difference of falling in love and loving someone...Or something like that. I didn't understand it at first but—"

"Wait a minute. She said what? What did she mean by that?" Draco interrupted, turning his full attention to the other boy. Blaise stopped and blinked at Draco's reaction. "The difference between falling in love and loving someone. It was kind of hazy at first but I think she actually meant for me to pass the meaning to you as well. It's something she and Potter seem to share an opinion of." He told him, causing Draco's eyes to widen in surprise.

"She did? Well what did she mean then? What is the difference between the two? Aren't they just the same?" He asked, looking completely confused. Blaise met his confusion with a look of his own, shrugging in uncertainty.

"I thought so too. But from the way Hermione explained it to me, it had something to do with the fact that to love someone is a decision. It's something you willingly choose or commit yourself to. As opposed

to loving someone when you find yourself involuntarily smitten with an ideal of the person – looks, intelligence, popularity, so on...” He explained, causing Draco’s eyebrows to fuse together even more in confusion.

“I don’t get it.”

Blaise smirked at the dumbfounded expression on the Head Boy’s face. It was undoubtedly the first time he had ever seen Draco, who he recognized as the most intelligent student in their year, to be at a loss for words and confused with what he was saying.

“Basically, I think it means that if you say you’re in love with someone – it happened out of your control. Like you were forced into it and it wasn’t something done out of your own free will. You fell in love. Or perhaps imagine being shot at by cupid’s arrow, to put it rather idiotically. It’s like you’re under a love potion and you’re only going to love her so long as she still has the characteristics you’re smitten for.” He tried to clarify and at that, Draco slowly nodded.

Unfortunately, he still had a rather uncertain look on his face. “So...Then is Granger saying that falling in love is temporary? It doesn’t last?” He asked and at that Blaise shrugged again, looking unsure of himself.

“I think so...Those were only my own deductions of course. I myself have been thinking about her words for quite some time now...I’ve been trying to figure them out. So far that’s all I’ve been able to conclude on my own.” He admitted, looking slightly sheepish.

Draco was still deep in thought, trying to process the implied meaning behind Blaise’s explanation. “So can I take it that when I say that I’m in love with someone...I only love her individual characteristics and not her – the whole person? Or that I only love her for what she has—” His voice trailed off but Blaise seemed to understand what he was getting at and grinned in response.

“—and not what she doesn’t? Is that correct?” He supplied, grinning wider when Draco nodded, looking fairly pleased with himself. “Is that



what Granger was trying to say?" He asked, looking at him again but Blaise snorted in derision.

"How should I know if we're correct? Damn these women, making our life too complicated with all their demands and romantic sentimentality. Why can't they understand that we men are simple thinkers and we're not used to thinking of this crap." He complained loudly and Draco couldn't help smirking at his words in agreement.

"Why can't they just bloody tell us what they want? Why do they always have to voice it out in riddles and poems like these? It makes my head hurt so much, I've been trying to decipher Granger's damn words for days now! It's like they expect that we can read their minds!" He complained further and Draco chuckled, shaking his head in amusement.

His smile faded however and he found himself contemplating again on Blaise's words. Somehow he knew – he couldn't explain how — but he was certain that this was the reason Harry had declined his proposal that night. He had said the wrong thing and he had made her believe something he didn't mean. He needed to figure out what she wanted him to say before anything else.

"Zabini... How do you understand the whole idea of loving someone being a decision?" Draco asked again, drawing Blaise's attention back from his nearly finished Potion's essay to his thoughtful face. Blaise blinked in surprise before pausing for a long moment to gather his thoughts again. When he began to speak, he found Draco's attention focused intently on him.

"I think...It means that since you make it your personal decision that you are going to love someone...You make love permanent. Precisely because even if the person loses her looks, intelligence and titles... Or if the person hurts you or doesn't exactly conform to what you expect, you still decide to love her nevertheless. So in effect, the love comes from you and it will never end unless you decide it will." He tried to explain, biting his lip in uncertainty once more.

"So...Even when all the excitement, the physical attraction, and the romance is gone...You still decide to love her. Even when you can't

seem to find any more reasons to love her and she drives you completely crazy and angry, even when she doesn't make you happy, or even during the moments you begin to hate each other, you still love her...Because it's your decision." Draco finally understood, nodding in affirmation as the words poured out his mouth.

Turning back to look at his best friend, he was surprised to find Blaise looking at him with wide eyes. "Wow...I think you got it. I think that was exactly what they meant. In all honesty, Hermione told me she learned that philosophy from Harry...Maybe it'll help you win her over." He told him and to this, Draco nodded quietly, still trying to process his own words.

"So...I don't understand then. Did Harry think that by saying what I did that night...That I don't love her?" He wondered out loud, a worried frown creasing his handsome features and to that, Blaise gave him a very serious look.

"Do you?"

Hearing this question, Draco blinked and looked at him in stunned silence as though he hadn't expected it and he couldn't figure out his own answer. After a long moment, he bit his lip and looked slightly crestfallen in realization, his eyes dimming sadly.

"I...don't know."

Blaise chose not to say anything as he noticed the dispirited expression on the other boy's face. He watched as Draco slowly slumped back down against the sofa and sighed heavily, running a hand through his hair in frustration.

"I suppose...I never bothered to think about it that way before." He admitted, slowly reaching into his robes and pulling out the small velvet box he kept with him at all times.

"I am in love with her...But I don't know if I can love her that way yet." He whispered, his voice sounding heavy with exhaustion. Holding the box up to his face, he opened it carefully and stared at the beautiful

diamond ring inside, blinking as he watched it shimmer from in the darkness of the Slytherin common room.

“I’d be lying if I didn’t say that I’m still a bit traumatized from Elisa.” He finally admitted, much to Blaise’s silent surprise. Once again, he didn’t say anything and continued to remain silent, knowing it affirmed his respect for Draco as his best friend.

Draco continued to gaze at the ring in silence, inspecting it carefully by holding it up to the light emanating from the fireplace in front of them. Scowling, he placed it carefully into his palm and slowly but tightly closed his fingers around it, his eyes soon following after.

It was in that position that he stilled for awhile, lost in his own heavy musings. After a long moment, Blaise finally sighed as well and reached over to clap him lightly on the shoulder. The other boy opened his eyes and raised an eyebrow weakly at him in query.

“You have a chance to find out... You have a date with her on Friday, don’t you? Maybe you’ll understand how you really feel about her then. Away from the crowds and everyone else.” He encouraged, giving the other boy a small grin.

He seemed to have said the right thing as Draco finally returned his grin with a small smirk, nodding his agreement. “You’re right. I’m thinking too much...Damn Granger and her sentimental rubbish. I shouldn’t have thought about this in the first place. You tell anyone and I’ll bury you alive, Zabini.” He threatened darkly, narrowing his eyes in warning.

Blaise smirked but nodded, refusing to say anything else. He watched as Draco shoved the ring back into his robes and stood up, beginning to gather his books and quills. “Well, I’d better get going. I still have to tutor more third year students. You going to be okay here for awhile?” He asked, raising an eyebrow at the other boy.

The dark-haired Slytherin looked unsure of himself as another question seemed to have escaped his lips. “When exactly are you planning to challenge Potter, anyway?” He asked, looking directly into Draco’s scowling face.

Draco looked slightly taken aback by his bluntness but recovered quickly and gave him a self-righteous sneer. "When the time is right." Was all he said but Blaise rolled his eyes and gave him an exasperated look.

"And when is that?! When someone else manages to beat her and your deadline's just about up?! What's the number now – about fifteen? Fifteen guys have challenged her already! You're being a complete idiot, do you know that?" He pointed out but Draco shook his head fiercely, giving him a scowl.

"I will challenge her when the time is right, Zabini. There are issues that she and I have to sort out first before anything else. You just concentrate on your own fruitless exploits with the mudblood before interfering in mine." He snapped firmly and before the other boy could say anything else in retaliation, Draco had stalked out of the common room and slammed the door shut loudly behind him, causing Blaise to wince in surprise.

"GET BACK, ALL OF YOU!"

Jaimee screamed in panic as she forced herself into another high kick, landing her foot perfectly into Anthony Goldstein's jaw and sending the Ravenclaw flying backwards into the festering crowd of waiting bachelors behind him.

It had been about an hour now since they had all started chasing her and demanding simultaneous magical combats the minute she had finished Quidditch practice and stepped out of the showers that afternoon. She was more than exhausted and more than willing to curl up in her bed and sleep but that didn't appear to be possible any time soon.

Cursing loudly in surprise, she ducked another stunning spell from one of the bachelors behind her. Biting back a scream of frustration as the remaining boys behind her picked themselves off the floor and continued to run back after her, she whirled hastily on her heel and began racing down the opposite direction again – shoving past students and teachers on her way.

She was particularly lucky that she had chosen to wear her rather loose jeans that day, as well as her good running shoes so she could outrun them easily. Unfortunately enough, she had eventually lost track of where she was within Hogwarts castle from all her panicked running and now she was blindly turning random corners, hoping to Merlin that she wouldn't come across a dead end.

As soon as she rounded another corner, she immediately froze in dread as she was met with the terrifying sight of another huge crowd of bachelors heading for her from the opposite end of the corridor – this time composed of Hufflepuff seventh years as well as Beauxbaton students. Biting back a whimper, she turned around and looked helplessly at the approaching crowd of Ravenclaw bachelors behind her, all of which were only a couple of feet away from her now.

Crap...I'm done for. I'm trapped! What now, Harry?! She thought, her eyes darting desperately around her for an exit. The crowd continued to race toward her, looming closer and closer as their heavy footsteps thudded noisily against the cold stone floor of the corridor.

Think! Think!

“YOU SODDING BASTARDS! YOU THINK THIS IS THE FAIR FIGHT I WAS TALKING ABOUT?! WHEN I MEANT FOR YOU TO CHALLENGE ME, I MEANT TO DO IT ONE AT A TIME!” She raged at them but none of them seem to have heard her as they readied their wands and continued their advance, trapping her further in the middle of the corridor.

Oh what's the use... Cringing at the anticipated pain, she shut her eyes just as they reached her, crouched down onto the floor and covered her head protectively with both hands. She could imagine the scene as they all seemed to pounce rather brainlessly on her form. Surprisingly enough, none of them managed to hit her as they ended up knocking into each other in a flurry of limbs and bruised bodies.

The sight would have been rather comical to behold as quite literally, a ball of gray smoke could have emerged from the rather messy tumble of intertwined fists to complete the scene. Within a couple of

seconds, Jaimee began hearing the sound of unmistakable fists slamming against fists as well as interesting slurs and curses around her form.

Blinking her eyes open, she grinned to herself in relief when she realized that she was smack in the middle of the brawl and that none of the stupid idiots seemed to be aiming for her as they were too busy fighting each other to notice.

I need to get out of here and back to the Gryffindor common room...But how?! I don't even know where I am! Stupid bloody bastards chasing me! She thought in panic, desperately trying to think of way to walk past them without them noticing her.

Crouching down on her knees, she discreetly began crawling her way out of the cloud of smoke. Just as she stopped and looked up, she caught sight of a meek looking first year student with huge, thick-framed glasses watching her in horror from the end of the hall.

Bingo!

Scrambling to her feet, Jaimee gave the student an easy grin and ran over to her, nearly causing the girl to squeak and run away had the Gryffindor not clasped her gently around the arm. "Hey kid, you mind if I borrow these for awhile? I'll be sure to return them. I promise." She whispered, hastily snatching the large frames from the shaking girl's face and setting them on herself.

Wincing briefly at the high grade lenses, Jaimee quickly transfigured her hair into a bright curly orange before following it up by casting an enlarging spell on her two front teeth, causing the watching first year to look at her as though she was insane.

"I'm not the best role model for you kid. Just so you know." She muttered under her breath, shaking her head before she finished her masterpiece by casting another charm on herself that placed a whole deal of freckles on her face, masking her appearance completely.

Pausing to glance briefly at herself in the reflection of the corridor window, she held back a round of laughter and winked at the still horrified first year before running off, noting with a rush of glee that the bachelors who had been chasing her had finally realized she was missing and were now screaming out profanities at each other as to where she could possibly have gone.

Then, forcing herself to walk slower so as not to cause any suspicions from the bachelors as they stormed right past her, she smirked in triumph and carefully began to walk back towards Gryffindor tower. She made sure that she was looking down at the floor lest anyone failed to recognize her and became suspicious.

As soon as she had rounded the corner and realized that she had finally lost the crowds chasing her and that she was now alone, she finally let out a sigh of relief and leaned back carefully against the wall in exhaustion. Closing her eyes, she allowed herself to take in huge inhales of oxygen before a familiar mocking voice suddenly startled her, causing her to jump in shock.

“Er...Can I help you...?”

The drawling voice sounded rather derogatory and condescending and she didn't even have to open her eyes to know who it belonged to. Opening her eyes either way, she found herself staring intently into Draco's handsome but otherwise coldly sneering face.

Hiding her relief, she let out a sigh of exhaustion and grinned at him, shaking her head in amusement. “Draco! I can't believe it but for once I'm actually glad to see you! You wouldn't believe the antics I've had to put myself through just to—”

“Excuse me, do I know you? I don't recall letting some freckled face, big-toothed troll call me by my first name. Since I'm head boy, I believe I'll have to take that against you as disrespect... Miss—” Before Harry could open her mouth, Draco spoke up again and eyed her suspiciously, sneering as his eyes seemed to look at her with disgust.

“—who are you anyway? Do you even realize that you shouldn’t be wandering around here at this time? That’s another set of house points against you, then. Hmm. Let’s see... That’s about thirty now, isn’t it? Ten for disrespecting authority, fifteen for being out of territory and another five simply for being horribly hideous and ruining my night by showing me your face.” He sneered further, causing Harry’s jaw to drop in disbelief at the harsh insults and mocking tone of his voice.

Before Draco could say anything else, Jaimee surprised herself when she had raised a hand and – instead of punching him – slapped him hard across his cheek. As soon as she realized that she had acted out more effeminately than she meant to, she instantly colored but that didn’t prevent her from glaring at Draco in intense anger.

The Slytherin seemed to have faltered for a minute and he had to take a step back in pain and shock from her harsh slap. As soon as he had recovered, he growled at her and was surprised to see her leveling with him with an achingly familiar, wounded glare.

“How dare you touch me?! Don’t you know who I am, you filthy scum?! I could have you suspended for several days for that kind of behavior you know! Now tell me your name so that I may take it up with the disciplinary committee—”

“You can forget about our date tomorrow, Malfoy! You’re nothing but a selfish, conceited jerk!” Was all she said before she shoved him away from her and stalked off, causing the Head Boy to blink in confusion and stare after her in dismay.

As soon as the words she had spoken sunk in, Draco’s eyes immediately widened in realization and dread and he tore after her, his heart pounding rapidly in his chest in panic.

“Harry?!”

Hearing the slight disbelieving crack in his voice, Jaimee whirled around and in one swift motion, swept her wand over herself – removing the charms she had placed on her face. Seeing Draco pale



further in realization, she removed the frames on her face and placed them gingerly in her pocket.

When the Slytherin looked as though he was unable to say anything, Harry spoke for him – her voice dripping with derision and disdain. “So...Is this how you treat other people who are inferior to you, Draco? Removing points off of them for being ugly? Have you really not changed at all from the selfish, conceited brat I met seven years ago? Are you really this shallow?” She asked sharply and Draco had the temerity to wince at the daggers in her eyes.

“Look, it’s not like I knew it was you! I—”

“What if that was me, Malfoy?! What then?! Are you going to shove me aside as well because I’m anything less than perfect? Does it always have to be all about perfection for you? The perfect girl? Is that what you want me to be? Is that why you turned me into a woman, Malfoy?!” She hissed angrily, causing him to wince again.

“You’re exaggerating, Harry! What happened back there was—”

“What happened back there...Was that I just saw the real Draco Malfoy for the first time this season. And I realized that, like always, he doesn’t care about anybody but himself.” She interrupted coldly, shaking her head at him in disgust.

Before Draco could even attempt to defend his actions, she had turned on her heel and stormed off again, leaving him staring after her retreating figure in stunned silence. He snapped himself out of his stupor and called after her, irritated at the way she was acting.

“Come on, Potter! Would you get off your high noble horse for one second?! How did you expect me to react?! Give me a break here!” He shouted after her in frustration, slamming his fist against the wall in exasperated anger.

From a good deal of meters ahead, Harry surprisingly heard him but she shocked him even further by turning around and giving him one last sneer.

“Here’s your goddamn break, Malfoy.”

Draco’s jaw dropped and his eyes flashed in indignation as she flashed him the finger before she sneered again and disappeared round the corner, leaving the flustered Head Boy gaping at her and sputtering in disbelief.

“Harry, are you okay? You turned in rather late last night. Where were you?” Ron asked the following morning as he, Harry and Hermione walked into the Great Hall for breakfast. Hearing this, Hermione also turned and gave her friend a curious glance but the girl moodily shrugged it off before plopping down on her usual seat on the Gryffindor table.

“In any case, you’ll both be glad to know that I’ve decided not to allow any further developments with Viktor or that jerk Zabini this season. I actually have a date tomorrow with Terry Boot.” Hermione cheerfully told them as she began helping herself to some French toast.

Ron rolled his eyes while Jaimee merely grunted in reply, stuffing her face with a mouthful of toast and waffles so she didn’t have to answer. “Terry Boot? He’s a little shrimpy isn’t he? Hermione, to be honest, I would have preferred Zabini to him. At least Zabini isn’t an annoying little twerp.” Ron commented and Hermione glared at him, narrowing her eyes in irritation.

“You’re hardly one to judge me, Ron! Do you have a date for tomorrow? Hogsmeade is going to be pretty interesting tomorrow too. From what I hear, they’ve having a special festival this weekend so there’s a fair worth looking into.” She told him. Ron growled under his breath, looking irritated.

“Do you have to remind me? I’m working on a bloody date, Hermione! Worse comes to worst, I’ll bloody stay in school! That way I won’t have to watch all the stupid couples making goo-goo eyes at each other.” He complained but Hermione rolled her eyes at his attitude.

“Lorraine Malfoy isn’t the only worthy debutante worth pursuing this season, Ronald. I’m sure there are dozens of other worthwhile

women you can date. You took Lavender to the debutante ball, didn't you? Why don't you ask her out again..."

Harry rolled her eyes and eventually tuned her friends' arguing out, letting her eyes trail off towards the Slytherin table. Surprisingly enough, for the first time since that school year started, Draco was still not there.

That's strange...He's usually here before we are. She thought to herself, raising an eyebrow in silent query. Frowning, she told herself not to care either way and forced herself to return to her breakfast. As she munched angrily on her waffles, however, she felt another overwhelming need to ram her fist into Draco's annoyingly handsome, smirking face.

After everything she had told him that night after the debutante ball, he still didn't understand that there was so much more to people – to her – for that matter, than her bloody looks and outward characteristics. The stupid selfish git was just using her to make himself look good in pureblood society. She couldn't believe she had actually thought he cared about her.

Stupid git...I ought to kick his arse. She thought moodily again, shaking her head and shoveling another forkful of food into her mouth, munching angrily on it with a discontented scowl on her face.

"Harry! Close your mouth while chewing, will you?!" Hermione lectured beside him, causing the other girl to roll her eyes again in annoyance.

"I wonder where Malfoy is...Surely, he should be here by now. I think Professor McGonagall is already looking for him. It's his turn to assist the professors today, I hope he doesn't bail and force me to take his shift for him." The Head Girl grumbled out loud as she looked up and peered over at the high table to where McGonagall was undoubtedly searching the Slytherin table with a frown on her face.

"Maybe he disappeared into non-existence. Or maybe a giant monkey ate him." Ron quipped and in spite of herself, Harry snorted

with laughter while Hermione turned to level the redhead with an exasperated glare.

“In the first place, monkeys do not eat humans, Ron! Much less giant ones. I’m serious, where is that git?! I’m going to castrate him if I find him purposely slacking off just so—OH MY.” Hermione broke her own trail of thought off as she suddenly found herself staring slack-jawed at the very entrance of the Great Hall, where a number of students had also stopped to gape at with hanging jaws.

“What? What’s happening—The bloody hell is that?! That’s freaking SCARY!” Ron’s voice cracked around the end in shock and hearing it seemed to have triggered something in Hermione and she slapped her hand over her mouth. A flurry of giggles began escaping from her, causing Ron to look at her as though she was insane.

“It’s not funny, Hermione! What the bloody hell is that crazy git think he’s doing?! Is he trying to become a bloody clown?!” He blurted out, looking at the said figure with wide, horrified eyes but Hermione only seemed to giggle harder, barely managing to keep herself upright from hilarity.

Raising a curious eyebrow as she heard the sudden wave of whispers and laughter that had erupted around them, Harry finally looked up and around the Great Hall in confusion, trying to follow her friends’ gazes. “What? What’s so funny Hermione? Why are you—”

Her words died in her throat and her eyes widened comically – her left eye bigger than her right – as she finally caught sight of exactly what had sent Hermione, one of the most serious girls she knew, into a fit of nonsensical giggles.

Standing right by the entrance of the Great Hall, stood a very colorful Draco Malfoy, who at the moment had a big, goofy grin on his face as he began making his way towards the Head Table where McGonagall was waiting for him, the expression on her face torn between mirth and disapproval.

The handsome Malfoy heir looked in such a way that Harry could only describe as completely ridiculous. He had enchanted his perfect

silver-blond hair into a cartoony bright neon orange which contrasted horribly against his pale complexion. Instead of sweeping it back with gel, he had spelled his hair into horrible curls and he had added further to his self-incrimination by wearing a pair of thick-framed, gigantic square glasses.

On his face, Jaimee could make out the numerous freckles he had magically charmed onto cheeks as well as the huge front teeth that stuck out horribly as he grinned – similar to the way she had enchanted her teeth last night. He was still wearing his Slytherin uniform and his Head Boy badge so they all knew it was him but otherwise, she would have never guessed that it was Draco at all.

As soon as he caught sight of her gaping and sputtering speechlessly at him, Draco grinned wider and gave her a saucy wink. Then, adding to the effect, he purposely used a single finger and meekly shoved his glasses back up his nose before he turned to a smirking McGonagall, who handed him a list of his duties for that afternoon.

Unfortunately for Draco, the glasses slipped from his face again and as he attempted to catch them before they hit the ground, the papers he held in his other hand eventually scattered onto the floor – much to the Slytherin's dismay and the Great Hall's roaring laughter yet again.

It was at that precise moment, unfortunately, that Pansy Parkinson had walked into the Great Hall – along with Daphne Greengrass – both girls making their way past Draco towards the Slytherin table. As soon as he saw them, Draco grinned widely and waved in acknowledgment.

"Hey Pans! Hey Daph! Good morning to you!" He greeted, all the while struggling to sort out the falling papers in his hands.

Pansy swept her eyes once down his frame and sneered in dislike, raising an eyebrow in disdain. "Who are you and why do you even know my name?" She asked haughtily, tossing her hair over her shoulder.

Daphne, however, seemed the smarter and obviously more observant of the two. Eyeing the Slytherin robes and the Head Boy badge on Draco's form, her eyes widened to comical proportions.

"Draco?!"

Hearing the high-pitched tone of her friend's voice, Pansy instantly turned and stared at Draco with her jaw hanging and her pug eyes bulging out of their sockets.

At their notorious leader's wide, mischievous grin and familiar wink, Pansy's eyes promptly rolled up the back of her head and the girl collapsed onto the floor, followed closely by Daphne who fainted listlessly right beside her.

That seemed to do it for Harry.

Without warning, she buried her face into her hands, promptly choked on the food that she had been chewing on and burst into a fit of uncontrollable, hysterical giggles – louder and much more unstoppable than Hermione's. Ron looked at the two girls as though they were insane, his eyes wide and disbelieving.

"Bloody hell! Why do you all think it's funny?! It's Malfoy, for Merlin's sake! I'd say he's up to something! I don't know what but it's not good!" He warned them but that only seemed to make Jaimee giggle even harder, gasping for breath as she looked up and caught sight of Draco grinning at her in relief before the Slytherin began to make his way toward her.

Ignoring the other laughing onlookers around them, he stopped right in front of her giggling form and knelt directly in front of her, causing some of the other girls to briefly stop laughing and smile in awe at the sight.

Gently removing the hands Jaimee was using to cover her face, Draco chuckled and waited until the giggling girl had opened her eyes again to look at him – only to snort with laughter once more as she caught sight of his face up close.

Draco, however, smiled at her amusement and raised a single eyebrow.

“So...Am I forgiven?” He asked gently, waiting until her giggles had subsided so that she could answer him.

Instead of answering him directly, Jaimee rewarded him with a genuinely beautiful smile. She shook her head helplessly in mirth as she reached forward and used a single finger to shove the heavy, dorky frames right back up his nose.

Then, still holding back another round of giggles, she leaned down, placed her hands on both sides of his face and pressed her lips briefly against his in a sweet, affectionate kiss. Neither of them noticed the watching onlookers around them as they held each other's forms – both of which were shaking with suppressed laughter.

When Jaimee finally pulled back, she smiled again and tapped Draco playfully on the nose. Draco smiled back, allowing Jaimee to see the genuine sparkle in his bright silver eyes.

“I'll see you at 8am tomorrow. Don't be late...You silly Slytherin.”

A/N: \*melts like a pile of giggling goo\* I'm so sorry! I understand the fluffiness of this chapter but I couldn't help it! The idea just popped into my head and I had to write it before their date! The opportunity was just too good to pass up! \*giggles like a lovesick girl\* Anyway, I hope this update was much after than you all expected! And I hoped you liked the last scene! \*wink\*

Thanks to all those who reviewed last time about Byron and his potential girl. I've decided and I'll probably not write about him in this story but I will write a oneshot about him some time in the future. Or I don't know, let's just see what happens later on.

Next Chapter: THE HOGSMEADE DATE! \*dun-dun-dun\*

But first, please make me happy and send me your thoughts alright? Until next time!

PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO REVIEW!



## Chapter 22 – A Little Beyond Friendship

Wrinkling her nose thoughtfully at her reflection in the mirror that next morning, Jaimee shrugged to herself and sighed. Around her, she heard the soft snores and sleepy grumbling of the other Gryffindor boys shuffling around in their beds, all of which were obviously still fast asleep.

Well...I suppose this is as good as it gets. She thought silently, briefly debating with herself if she should tie her long black hair up or leave it down framing her face. Studying her reflection more carefully, she sighed and decided against it, reaching up to high the long strands up in a high ponytail.

She wore an old but stylish pair of her favorite black jeans, which she had charmed smaller to fit around her form. With them, she paired a simple white collared shirt which had also been charmed to fit onto her smaller frame and to make adjustments for her breasts – which she had not bothered to strap down with bandages that day. Fusing her eyebrows together, she took another deep breath and grabbed the pale green jacket on her bed, throwing it on herself and zipping it up until just below her neck.

As she bent down and began tying on her white sneakers, a small smile peaked itself onto her face as she recalled the events of the previous morning. Although – as usual – she had not seen Draco following breakfast for the whole afternoon that day, the memory of what he had done to himself during breakfast kept her in hysterics through most of her classes.

It had been strange...Yet oddly sweet.

If anything, the kiss they had shared in front of many onlookers in the Great Hall that day had left many questions unanswered in her head. She knew, more than ever, that she cared for him so much deeper now than the beginning of the season. In fact – despite everything else – she had already made the decision to love him... And Harry was never one to back out on a decision as consequential as that. The question remained, however, if whether or not he felt the same.

Of course he does! He wouldn't have done all that if he didn't care about you, you prick. Her old masculine voice resounded frustratingly into her head again, causing her to roll her eyes at herself. Ignoring the thought, she moved on to her next foot and began tying her shoes again, losing herself in another flurry of silent questions.

But then again...A lot of people seem to be asking me often lately if there's something between me and Malfoy...I don't know what to tell them. She mused, shaking her head. Grabbing her wand from her trunk and stuffing it into her pocket, she jumped up noisily onto her feet, causing Ron to give a loud grunt of annoyance from the next bed.

"Whoops...Sorry, Ron."

Wincing, she chuckled briefly before lightening her footsteps, peering briefly through the curtains of Ron's bed to come upon her red-haired best friend still buried deep in his covers. She poked him briefly on the shoulder to signal her leave and he answered her with another half-grunt, half-snore, causing her to roll her eyes.

"I'm going to go ahead. I suppose I'll see you and Hermione around in Hogsmeade, alright?" She whispered but Ron seemed to have fallen back asleep at this point. Shrugging, she turned and quickly strode out of the dormitory, making sure to walk quietly past Seamus' bed where she knew that both Dean and Seamus had slept in last night.

Shuddering at the memory of the giggles that had plagued the room and kept her awake for most of the night, she shook her head in dismay before finally heading out the door – pausing briefly to grin at Neville as she saw him making his way toward her from the stairs.

"Good morning, Harry! Have a good night's sleep?" He asked cheerfully as she shut the door behind them. Turning to him with a wry smirk, she answered him by raising a single eyebrow. "Are you kidding me, Neville? Amidst Ron's loud snoring, Dean and Seamus' giggles and...other stuff...How could I not?" She answered sarcastically, causing the boy to wince in agreement.

“Yeah...Uhm...They’ve been kind of like that ever since they got together. I probably should have warned you.” He mused, laughing at the exasperated look on the girl’s face. “Anyway, what are you doing up so early? Excited to go to Hogsmeade are you?” He teased, giving her a knowing smile.

Jaimee merely snorted, giving him a pointed glare in response. “I could ask you the same question. You woke up earlier than I did this morning. When I woke up, your bed was already made. Where are you off to today, Neville?” She teased in retaliation, causing Neville to blush in embarrassment.

“Oh...Well...I woke up early because I took a quick jog around the Quidditch pitch this morning. I’m heading back now to take a shower before I head off with Luna to Hogsmeade. She’s really excited about the fair they have over there...Have you heard of it?” He asked and Jaimee nodded, giving him a rueful grin.

“Yep. Sounds pretty interesting, I’m thinking of checking it out myself, later. Anyway, I better get going. I’ll see you around later, alright?” She said, giving the other Gryffindor one last smile before they waved and he headed back inside the room while she began making her way down the stairs to the common room.

When she got there, she was fairly surprised to see a number of fourth years and fifth years already waiting for some of their friends near the entrance. At the sight of the girl-who-lived, they all smiled at her and she nodded cordially at them in response. One of the fourth year girls – a bouncy brunette whom Jaimee knew was named Bridget – came up excitedly to her with a giggle.

“Miss Jaimee...Draco Malfoy has been waiting outside for you for about five minutes now. He’s right outside the entrance....He’s so dreamy! You’re so lucky, Miss Jaimee! He is so bloody gorgeous!” She gushed in a high pitched, giggly voice – causing Harry to wince and roll her eyes in irritation.

“He’s not that handsome! Get a grip on yourself! Guys hate the way girls giggle all the time like that.” She growled in response to the

small group of giggling girls behind Bridget, causing the younger students to look slightly embarrassed.

Rolling her eyes again and mumbling under her breath, she shot them one last irritated glare before huffing and stalking out of the portrait hole. As soon as she caught sight of the devastatingly handsome figure leaning silently against the nearby wall, however, her breath hitched into her throat.

Bridget was right. Draco Malfoy was bloody gorgeous.

Gone was the ridiculously, comically hideous appearance she had seen strutting into the Great Hall and the previous morning and in its place – she was once again reminded of precisely how staggeringly handsome the Malfoy heir really was. It was almost as if the entire scene in the Great Hall that day had been completely imagined in her head and for the life of her, she couldn't even remember what Draco had looked like as she stared at him now, stunned with admiration.

Like Harry, he was wearing a simple attire – black pants and a white long-sleeved collared shirt with the top two clasps left unbuttoned. Draped over his left shoulder, he was holding a stylish, tailored gray suede jacket and on his feet were gleaming clean black shoes. Unlike most school days, his hair had been slicked back but some strands were left to fall freely into his eyes. Those intense mercury orbs were at the moment engrossed very intently on the pages of the book he was reading as he leaned leisurely against the wall and waited for her.

Biting back a smile, she waited for him to notice her there – contentedly observing him several feet away. When she caught sight of the title of the book he seemed to be so particularly immersed in, her eyebrows rose in both curiosity and amazement.

“‘The Prince’ by Niccolò Machiavelli... What interesting taste you have in literature, Malfoy...” She mused loudly, finally causing the Slytherin to quirk a single eyebrow in mild surprise. His lips quirked lazily into a sexy smile and his eyes lifted very slowly from the pages of his book to pierce through hers, unknowingly causing a shiver to run down her spine. Seeing the amused expression on her face, he

smirked briefly before tucking the book back into his jacket's inside pocket.

Before he could say anything, she spoke again – bringing their attention back to the book he had been reading. “That’s a rather difficult text to read, Draco...Is it a required reading for one of your classes or something?” She asked as she approached him, causing him to chuckle to himself.

“It is rather difficult but it’s very interesting and no it’s not a required reading. I’m actually reading it for fun. I just finished Martin Heidegger’s ‘Being and Time’ yesterday so I wanted to start on a new book before midterms week kicks in and takes up all my attention.” He informed her briefly, a small smirk still on his lips.

Jaimee’s eyes widened in disbelief and she looked at him as though he had three heads. “I really never pegged you to be the intellectual you are, Malfoy. I think I preferred the days I used to think of you as a brainless twit...” She mumbled, shaking her head at his choice of books.

She wasn’t much of a reader herself and thankfully, Draco didn’t seem to follow up her comment with a question on her own choice of books which, unfortunately, was limited to the very textbooks they had to read in class or to the occasional Quidditch magazine she would borrow from Ron.

At the look of mixed disbelief and admiration on the Gryffindor’s face, he chuckled and finally took a step back – surveying her appearance for the first time and noting, with a sense of amusement, how much Jaimee seemed to have made sure that her outfit showed no signs of her feminine curves whatsoever.

“Potter...You look...nice.” He finished lamely, his voice ending in such a flat unsure tone that Jaimee – in spite of herself – broke out into a fit of soft, amused laughter. “So do you...Which is strange considering I miss the neon orange hair and the freckles.” She easily countered, earning herself another sexy grin from him at the quip.

When he merely sneered at her, she laughed again and shrugged off her own jacket, tossing it over her shoulder the way he did his. "Were you expecting another ball gown, Draco? We are going to a fair, after all. And with the stuff I want to do today, I doubt wearing a ball gown would be all that convenient." She told him, still chuckling as she stepped slightly to the side to avoid a large group of Gryffindor sixth years who were making their way out of the common room.

Seeing the bright, beautiful smile on her face, the sneer on Draco's face hesitantly gave way to a smile of his own and he shook his head at her antics. Then, pretending to heave a sigh of resignation, he smirked again and offered her his arm in an indication of escorting her. "Well then, shall we?" He drawled, looking expectantly at her.

Instead of taking his arm, Jaimee just stood there and grinned widely at him, an innocent expression on her face. "Hey Draco... I think you take your life way too seriously. Always studying and reading the books of all those complicated politicians and philosophers and such...I think you need to loosen up a little." She spoke nonchalantly, causing the Head Boy to give her a confused stare.

"What do you mean?"

Draco's interest was piqued at her words and he raised a single eyebrow at her with an uncertain expression on his face. "Just what exactly have you planned this date out to be, Potter? What are we going to be doing?" He asked suspiciously but Harry just smiled again and shook her head, allowing the Slytherin a glimpse of the mischievous sparkle in her emerald green eyes.

"You'll see."

"Young man, is this your first time playing paintball?"

Draco blinked haughtily in response, an unwelcoming look on his handsome face as his eyes roamed around the large paintball booth that had been positioned near the very middle of the village square in Hogsmeade. Around them, he could make out the dozens of other booths and stalls that have been set up and scattered around the

village – all of which were buzzing with young Hogwarts students and couples strolling around the area.

Making their way from Hogwarts Castle that morning, they had passed by a number of other students already milling about, checking around some of the open fair booths and stalls. Surprisingly enough, they had seen Lorraine and Philippe mingling around with a group of other pureblooded heirs near the food stalls.

Jaimee noticed, however, that the female half-veela looked slightly put out at having Philippe clinging rather possessively onto her arm. This was immediately confirmed when Lorraine had smiled sheepishly at her upon having met her amused gaze, causing Jaimee to give her a sympathetic look.

She didn't have much time to dwell on the scene though as Draco pulled her away from them before any of the other pureblooded heirs could see them. From there, he dragged her off towards the center of the village, passing by several more strolling debutantes and their dates as they did.

To Jaimee's surprise, they had seen Sirius and Miss Regina walking leisurely near the affluent stores in Hogsmeade with little Keira riding happily on Sirius' shoulders. At the sight of Jaimee, the adorable five-year-old had waved and squealed, immediately diverting Sirius' attention to his wincing goddaughter and more importantly – to the smirking blonde Slytherin beside her.

While Sirius' eyes had narrowed in suspicion – obviously unable to believe that his goddaughter had come with the Malfoy heir willingly – Miss Regina had smiled warmly at them and commented on how good they looked together as a couple, causing Harry to redden further and Draco to grin in response.

Thoroughly embarrassed and wanting to escape from them before her godfather could ask her any questions as to why she was with Draco, Jaimee had excused herself, grabbed Draco by the hand and ran off deeper into the village square.

“Mister...? Your helmet and padding gear...?”

The question had broken Draco's thoughts but when the Slytherin still remained silent, the smiling, elderly man manning the station turned questioningly at Jaimee who was, at that moment, strapping on the protective masks and padding on herself. Seeing this, Harry rolled her eyes and poked Draco lightly on the shoulder, snapping him out of his musings.

"What's the matter, Draco? You scared...?" She mocked lightly, finally causing Draco blink briefly before turning sharply to give her a glare. "You wish, Potter! I am so going to kick your arse at...pickball...?" He asked, taking the helmet and padding the elderly man was offering him and inspecting them briefly in slight disdain and uncertainty.

"Ugh...This is going to mess up my hair." He complained loudly, causing Harry to laugh at the expression of disdain and dislike on his face. Shaking her head, she turned and began strapping her own helmet onto herself, making sure to brush away the strands of hair falling into her eyes.

"It's paintball, Draco...And quit being such a girl! Come on!" She laughed and ran off towards the small magical maze situated in front of the booth, pointedly ignoring Draco's protests and loud complaints. "Potter, get back here! How do you play this game?!" He screeched in irritation as he took the large pellet gun the elderly man offered him and inspected it carefully in confusion.

The man chuckled and corrected his position, hoisting the handle of the gun up onto his shoulder and indicating the attached scope. "It isn't all that difficult...You just look through this thing and pull the trigger." He pointed out the small trigger before giving the Slytherin another smile.

When Draco still looked hesitant, the man pointed to the small maze of green hedges Jaimee had run off to and gave him an encouraging nod. "You see that small maze over there? Your friend should be somewhere in there right now, waiting for you. The object of the game is to hit her with as many pellets of this gun as you can within a half hour. It doesn't hurt at all, of course. When your pellet hits her, it



will burst and cover her with white paint. Hers will cover you with green paint. After the game, the cleanest one wins.” He explained, causing Draco to grumble to himself.

“Great...Just like Potter to think of a game like this for a bloody date.” He muttered as he begrudgingly began strapping on the protective padding on himself, hesitatingly taking the helmet and giving the offending thing a look of disdain. Then sighing, he quickly strapped it on and blinked when the elderly man smiled at him again – this time with an amused twinkle in his eyes.

“Oh, do be careful though. The maze is slightly enchanted so there are some obstacles and creatures inside every now and then. The creatures aren’t real. They’ll disappear if you manage to shoot their weak spots with your pellet gun though. Have fun!” He cheered before he lightly pushed the Malfoy heir into the maze, causing Draco to exclaim in indignation.

“Hey wait a minute, old man! I didn’t say I was ready yet! Did you— huh?” He blinked as he turned around and watched as the old man waved once more at him before waving his wand and magically sealing the Slytherin into the maze with another large green hedge, blocking him from view of the next pairs of students waiting in line at the booth after them.

As soon as the hedge had closed, Draco instantly stiffened as he was enveloped in dark silence and his eyes darted around his surroundings carefully, narrowing in irritation. “Potter, you stupid git! Where the hell are you?! Is this your idea of a fun date?!” He yelled loudly in complaint but his ire rose further when all he was met with was his own voice echoing and Jaimee’s soft giggle from somewhere deeper into the maze.

His muscles tense and his hands tightening around the gun in his hands, Draco cautiously began entering the maze with soft, silent footsteps – making sure to turn the corners carefully to make sure he wasn’t met with a green pellet to the face. He tensed further when he heard the soft, scuffled sound of hurried footsteps up ahead and he smirked in triumph.

“Gotcha...” He whispered to himself as he picked up his pace and began running after the sound. In spite of himself, he felt a faint rush of excitement in the pit of his stomach as he turned the corner just in time to catch a glimpse of Jaimee scurrying to hide behind a nearby hedge.

Before the Gryffindor could react, he hoisted his gun up to his shoulder, peered through the scope to aim and pulled the trigger with a sharp click – immediately sending a flurry of large white pellets hurling after her. Draco started to laugh as Jaimee squealed in surprise before keeling backward as she was pelted with white paint, causing her to stumble onto the ground.

Seeing him still laughing a couple of feet away, she growled loudly and – from her lying position on the floor – grabbed her fallen gun and aimed at him, sending her own flurry of green pellets toward his face. Draco’s eyes widened and he quickly ducked himself behind another hedge, managing to avoid his face being pelted with green paint.

He groaned, however, when he looked down and saw the small green spot just above his knee. “You done running away, Potter?” He taunted loudly, listening carefully to the loud scuffle of footsteps once more and noting, with a smirk on his face, how much Harry should learn the meaning of stealth.

“Who says I was running away from you, Malfoy?” She retorted with a hint of amusement dripping from her voice. Draco’s eyebrows fused together in confusion at that and curious, he peered round the corner and immediately cursed out loud as he was met with the hulking form of a Blast-Ended Skrewt.

“Mother of Merlin!” He cursed loudly before he scrambled backwards, running blindly through the opposite direction of the maze and praying that he wasn’t going to end up in a dead end – which he eventually did. Hearing the Blast-Ended Skrewt still chasing after him, he whirled around, quickly aimed his gun up at its antlers – its known weak spot – and fired, grunting when the force of the gun blew him back to crash against the hedge behind him.

As soon as the white pellet had hit the creature's antlers, its entire form seemed to dissipate and vanished, its high-pitched screeching fading away into silence. Shoulders heaving with exhaustion, Draco leaned against the maze hedge for a minute to catch his breath, tensing when he heard Jaimee's voice speak up again.

"Psst! Draco!"

His eyes widened in dread and he slowly followed the sound of her hissed voice. Looking up, he finally saw her peering down at him from the other side of the hedge wall he was leaning against.

"Potter! Don't you dare—"

He never got to finish his sentence as she grinned in triumph and pointed her gun at him, sending a whole round of about five pellets shooting after his form.

"Fuck!"

Draco yelped and tore off in the opposite direction, cursing loudly each time he felt a paint pellet smash against his back. He didn't stop running though and he managed to circle himself around the maze just enough to catch a glimpse of her running after him with her gun poised at her shoulder and aiming to fire.

Before she saw him, his eyes narrowed and he shot at her – causing her to cry out in both surprise and hilarity yet again as she was bombarded with another range of white paint, one of the pellets managing to hit her square in the helmet's face visor. At this, Draco smirked widely and tore off hastily in the opposite direction when he saw the death glare in her eyes, ducking himself behind a rectangular arrangement of hedges and covering his mouth to stifle his loud sniggers.

He heard her angry footsteps approaching him nearby and he quieted himself, grinning only when he heard her speak up again. "You are going to pay for that one, Malfoy! Get out here so I can give you a green helmet face!" She shouted furiously, causing Draco to bite down another round of sniggers again.

Peering from his hiding place and seeing her inspecting a corner from a couple of meters away, he quickly made a decision. Rising up silently to his feet and tightening his hand around his gun, he slowly stepped out of his hiding spot and fired again, a triumphant sneer on his face.

The sneer disappeared, however, when Jaimee had turned out and sneered back, expertly ducking his pellets and easily firing her own gun in retaliation. Unfortunately, Draco wasn't as quick to react reflexively from his shock and he only had time to blink before he was rewarded with not one but three paint pellets to his own helmet.

Jaimee watched, giggling as the Slytherin stumbled backwards, cursing and wiping his now green-spattered helmet visor. Setting his gun down briefly, he pulled off his helmet and began to wipe it clean. He tried shooting her a dirty glare but he only ended up laughing again when he saw the numerous paint blotches on her form.

"You know...I don't remember laughing this much with anyone, Harry..." He admitted and despite the green paint he knew was spattered all over himself, he couldn't help it – he smiled at her. He was, without a doubt, having the most fun he had ever had in his life during that one specific moment alone and he didn't care how he looked.

Harry smiled back at his words and she stepped toward him. Setting her own gun and helmet down, she leaned up to wrap her hands around his neck and rewarded him with a short affectionate kiss on the cheek. When she pulled back, his eyes were surprisingly dazed and his cheeks were tinged with a light shade of red.

Seeing the expression in his eyes, she began to look confused as well. Before she could say anything, however, Draco's eyes had moved to focus behind her over her shoulder and widened, panic clearly etched onto his handsome features.

"Potter..."

Hearing the edge in his voice, she stiffened and whirled around.

“What—”

Harry cut herself off when she caught sight of the hulking Salamander which had begun to make its way toward them from a couple of feet away, the fire on its back blazing brightly and illuminating the fear that was on both teenagers' faces.

“Shoot its head...” Draco whispered in her ear, his hand tightening around hers and slowly pulling her backwards. The Salamander's beady eyes seemed to focus on them, watching their tense forms. Nodding, Harry let him pull her backwards; the both of them grabbing their guns.

Once she had shot at its head, the Salamander gave a single hiss before it vanished into thin air, leaving the two teenagers staring awkwardly at each other in silence. As soon as they had caught their breaths, Draco let go of her hand and almost immediately, Jaimee missed its warmth on her fingers. Unfortunately for her, she didn't have enough time to linger on that thought when Draco smirked again, turning to her and pointing his gun directly at her midsection.

“Round two...?” He challenged, smirking wider at the indignation and playful humor that flashed in her eyes as her hands tightened around her gun. Before she could answer him, he had raised his gun up and pointed it directly at her helmet-free face, a wide sneer growing on his face.

“Malfoy, don't even think about it! If you dare to even—”

She stopped midsentence and screeched in fury and indignation when Draco had merely given her an evil smile before promptly pulling the trigger, sending a single paint pellet hurling towards her face.

SPLAT!

Collapsing in a fit of uncontrollable laughter, Draco set his gun down briefly and turned away to hide his face, laughing harder when he heard Harry cursing angrily behind him. Turning around, he held back

another round of laughter when he caught sight of the Gryffindor's white-spattered face and the growl she was sending him.

In spite of herself, Harry had to smile at the look of utter contentment on his face. It was the first time she had ever seen Draco look so carefree and so at ease with himself that she wanted to spend that moment just watching him, admiring the happy glow she saw in his eyes.

When he caught her staring, the smile on his face melted away into a confused grimace and he raised an eyebrow at her in query. "What?—"

"You have something on your face, Malfoy." She told him flatly, indicating to a spot just above his eyebrows. When he lifted a hand to wipe at it, she used that specific moment to smirk and raise her gun up at him, aiming it directly into his face.

"Where—"

SPLAT!

Sputtering in horror and indignation, a green-faced Draco now growled and hurled himself after a loudly giggling Jaimee who gave a short squeal and tore off into the opposite direction. Hearing Draco's indignant footsteps chasing after her, she eventually dissolved into another fit of laughter when she felt more large white pellets bursting blots of paint against her back.

"Are you hungry?"

Jaimee turned at his question to see Draco looking questioningly at her. He was pulling his suede jacket back onto himself after they had cleaned themselves off and exited the paintball booth. Despite her many protests and attempts to reason with him, the elderly man had declared Draco the winner of the game and since then, the Slytherin had been giving her a gloating smile – making sure to inform each person they knew who passed them that he had beaten Harry Potter at a paintball game.

Despite herself, she had found his antics amusing and she hadn't bothered to deny his words – even as they had passed Ron and Ginny waiting in line to play paintball as well. Ron had given her a look of horror as though waiting for her to deny it and when she didn't, Draco flashed him such an arrogant sneer that Ron would have managed to punch him had Jaimee not pulled the Slytherin away before he could.

Draco watched her expression carefully, raising an eyebrow in impatience. “Well? Are you hungry? It's 11:30...I was thinking of grabbing some lunch now while the restaurants aren't full yet.” He told her, his hand reaching out to intertwine their fingers together as they walked.

She blushed at the action but she didn't pull away, squeezing her fingers around his hand and allowing him to begin leading her off towards the more affluent sector of the village to where some expensive restaurants were. Still blushing, she nodded and gave him a grin.

“Sure...But only under one condition, Malfoy. I get to choose the restaurant.” When Draco looked as though he was going to protest vehemently, she kept talking as though she hadn't seen him, making her voice even firmer and louder. “If you think for one second that I am going to let you drag me off to these snooty looking place, you're wrong. I didn't even bring the money to spend for these places.” She finished and at that, Draco's eyes flashed in indignation and his hackles rose.

“You're not going to pay for your lunch, Potter. I'm the guy! I'm supposed to pay for everything! Are you purposely trying to embarrass me?!” He raged in a loud voice, causing some of the passing couples to look at them curiously. Jaimee blushed darker in embarrassment at their stares and gave Draco a warning look, indicating for him to calm down.

“Draco, I'm not a girl so I don't need you to pay for me. I—”

“Of course you are! You've been a bloody girl for nearly half a year now! I am the Malfoy heir, do you have any idea how embarrassing it

will be for me if people find out that I let my date pay for her own lunch?! I—”

“Keep your voice down, Malfoy...I don’t want another batch of articles in the gossip tabloids...” She mumbled miserably, pausing to flash a reassuring smile at another passing couple – Theodore Nott and Marietta Edgecombe – who was, at that moment, giving the pair amused smirks.

Seeing the ire still in his eyes, Harry sighed and shook her head before looking up and giving him a reluctant smile. When Draco didn’t return it and sneered at her, she leaned over and tapped him on the nose, causing the Slytherin to scowl further in response.

Laughing, she finally sighed and relented – nodding and shrugging at him in helpless agreement. “Alright...You win, Draco. You can pay for my lunch...But...On the condition that I get to choose the place. Deal?” She repeated, causing the Slytherin to visibly relax but otherwise give her a scathing glare in irritation.

“Fine...Ugh. You make such an annoyingly stubborn woman, Potter.” He complained loudly as he grabbed her hand once more, intertwining his fingers possessively through hers. She snorted derisively at that, rolling her eyes at his words. “I’m stubborn...? You’re such a brat, Malfoy.” She grumbled, shaking her head.

She was just about to pull him towards the other section of the village when she stopped and froze, her gaze immediately drawn to the red-headed woman who had passed them at that particular moment. Her eyes widened in an appreciative glance as they inspected the woman’s particularly large bust, exposed very revealingly by the outrageously low neckline of her dress.

Harry couldn’t help it. She let out a low whistle under her breath and shook her head to herself in thought. That woman has an amazing chest on her, she does...I’d love to get my hands on a pair of those... She thought and as soon as she realized that she had just checked out a random stranger – a woman at that – she blushed and turned sharply away – expecting to find Draco glaring at her in horror.



Her eyes widened in shock and surprisingly – feminine indignation – however, as she found him staring dazedly at the woman's breasts as well and without thinking, she slapped him painfully on the arm, causing him to wince in pain and look at her in embarrassment.

“What was that for?!”

Jaimee gave him a screeching glare, her green eyes narrowing at him and clearly demanding an explanation. “Were you just checking out that woman's breasts?! You sodding, arrogant, no-good pervert! I ought to-”

Draco scoffed at her reaction, giving her a pointed sneer. “So what?! So were you!” He retorted derisively, causing her to freeze mid-tirade and redden in embarrassment. At the expression on her face, Draco began to laugh to himself and that made her even angrier and causing her to hit him painfully on the arm again.

“OW! Bloody hell, Potter! You hit hard!”

“And so what if I was?! Her breasts were ridiculously huge and they looked like they were going to spill out!” She argued at hearing her words, several passing debutantes turned and gave her a horrified, scandalized glare – successfully causing Draco to laugh harder.

Her ire rising further at his obvious amusement, she shoved him away from her in outrage, causing him to step back a couple of feet. “You horny, perverted prick! That still doesn't change the fact that you were staring at them and drooling—”

“I'm a guy! Of course I was! It's a natural, biological response, Potter! You see giant breasts – you stare! You should know that!” Draco argued back, raising his hands up in defense as he met Jaimee's heated glare with his own. “Besides....Like I said...so were you! You were staring at her even before I saw her!” He countered further, this time causing the glare on her face to falter into a cringe of embarrassment.

“Well so what if I was? I'm a guy too so—”

“No you’re not!”

“YES I AM!”

Draco raised a single hand, placed it squarely on her left breast and squeezed, immediately causing the Gryffindor to screech and raise her own hand up to slap him hard across the face. She shoved his hands away, hastily wrapping her arms protectively around her chest and turning as red as a tomato.

“YOU PERVERT!” She yelled at him, watching as the Slytherin recovered himself from the force of her slap. Turning to meet her blushing gaze, he laughed and shook his head at her

“That sure didn’t feel like a man’s chest to me...” He drawled pointedly, rubbing his sore cheek and smirking at her as she gave an indignant growl before wrapping her jacket tighter around her and zipping it back up protectively.

Despite the pain in his cheek, Draco laughed again and pulled her closer toward him, wrapping his arms around her slender waist. He leaned down briefly to give her a kiss on the cheek before whispering something in her ear, smirking when he felt her shiver in his arms.

“Don’t worry, love...I think your breasts are so much more beautiful than those...If only you’d let them show once in a while...” He drawled teasingly, causing her to blush even more – if that was possible. The heated moment was interrupted when they both heard a rather low growling sound – causing Draco’s eyebrow to hitch up questioningly at her and the corners of his lips to quirk into a mirthful grin.

An awkward silence passed between them before Harry finally spoke up, her voice sounding muffled. “I’m sorry...That was my stomach...I’m...kind of hungry.” She admitted, biting her lip sheepishly in an embarrassed grimace.

When she buried her face against his chest to hide her dire humiliation, Draco’s other eyebrow rose as well and he started to laugh, shaking his head at how much he found her antics completely

adorable. Still chuckling, he nodded and took her hand before speaking.

“Well...Where to, Harry...?”

Grinning widely, she squeezed his hand before tugging on it and began to lead him towards the opposite area of the village – making their way through several more seventh year couples who were also now beginning to head towards the restaurants for lunch.

Catching a glimpse of Hermione and Terry Boot, Harry smiled and waved cheerfully at them, her smile disappearing briefly for a minute when she caught sight of the bored expression on Hermione’s face as the Head Girl could only wave back weakly in response.

Eventually, she finally caught sight of the restaurant she was looking for – the small but cozy pasta café near the very edge of Hogsmeade. It wasn’t much of a sight to look at from the outside, however and judging from the look of distaste on Draco’s face, she could tell the Malfoy heir was probably thinking the same thing.

“This place...? Harry, it doesn’t look like it’s been sanitized. Are you sure—”

“Come on, Draco! Let’s go in, I’m starving!” She interrupted, yanking him into the café and guiding him through the maze of small tables and chairs to the booth at the very corner of the room. Draco wrinkled his nose disdain as he eyed the table hesitantly, noting the dust and rusted furniture before Harry had yanked him to sit down beside her, handing him the menu.

Glancing around the small shop, there were three other couples already seated – an elderly couple drinking coffee, two fourth-year Hufflepuffs seated near the entrance and surprisingly, Neville Longbottom and Luna Lovegood who were both seated at the booth opposite them.

Seeing them there, Jaimee’s face lit up and she grinned cheerfully at them, causing both teenagers to smile and wave back in return. When they turned to smile and wave uncertainly at Draco, the

Slytherin merely sneered and raised an eyebrow haughtily at them in derision, causing Harry to glare at him in warning.

“Hey guys... How’s the fair so far? Have you tried out the paintball booth yet?” Harry asked them, causing Luna to smile back and shake her head. “No but we’re planning to after lunch. I hear the lines are really long though...So if they are, we’ll probably just roam around the village some more.” She replied and Neville grinned at that, gesturing to the shopping bags near their chairs.

“Yeah, Luna’s been on a shopping streak the entire day. I didn’t even know she was fond of shopping until today.” He complained, causing Jaimee to laugh and shoot him a smile of sympathy.

“Yeah, women and shopping are a terrible combination—” She stopped when a young waiter had finally approached their table, causing them to look up into his friendly smile. Briefly waving once more at Neville and Luna, she finally turned to a sulking Draco and gave him a small smile.

“Do you know what you’re going to order yet?” She asked, sighing as she watched him handle the menu as though it was the dirtiest thing he had ever held in his life. Turning to her, he shrugged and turned to the waiter with a haughty sneer on his face.

“About your seafood linguini...Are the seafood fresh? And what kind of wines do you use to mix in with the pasta, are they the branded kinds? If they aren’t, I’m willing to pay extra—”

“He’ll have the seafood linguini.” Harry interrupted, smiling apologetically at the confused waiter, who smiled and nodded at her in understanding. Draco glared angrily at her and opened his mouth to complain further but the Gryffindor spoke on, ignoring his irritation. “As for me...I’ll have the fettuccine with clams.” She added cheerfully, waiting as the waiter nodded again, taking down their orders.

“Oh...And uhm...Can I have some chocolate mousse for dessert after?” She added as an afterthought, causing the young waiter to blush at the beautiful smile she gave him. “For you, beautiful...dessert

is on the house.” He offered flirtatiously, failing to notice the dangerous flaring in Draco’s steely gray eyes.

Jaimee looked surprised at that but smiled and shook her head in embarrassment. “Oh no, that’s not necessary. I’d be really embarrassed—”

She stopped and gasped out loud in shock when Draco had shot up violently from his seat and seized the young waiter by the front of his shirt, his gleaming wand pointed dangerously at the cowering boy’s face.

“You son of a bitch! How dare you hit on my woman? And in front of me, no less!” Draco growled threateningly, his eyes dark and menacing as he pressed the tip of his wand sharply on the waiter’s forehead, causing the boy to tremble in nervousness and apology.

“I—I’m sorry, sir! I-It won’t happen again, I promise! I—”

“DRACO!”

The Slytherin froze, turning flashing eyes to the sputtering Gryffindor beside him but the minute those deadly, piercing eyes had rested on hers, she gulped and smiled nervously, idly pointing to the grip he still had on the waiter’s suit.

“I was just...well... wondering why you were threatening to kill the waiter just now...But don’t mind me, carry on.” She rushed out nervously, smiling at him and wincing when his eyes flashed again and he snarled at her in anger.

“You are such a flirt, Potter! I ought to—”

He stopped when Jaimee stood up, leaned toward him and placed her lips gently on his, giving him another short, sweet kiss. Almost immediately, the grip he had on the waiter’s suit loosened and his angry sneer seemed to fade into reluctant smile.

As soon as the anger had gone from the Slytherin’s face, Jaimee turned to the waiter and frantically gestured for the boy to leave while

he could before Draco remembered why he was angry in the first place. The waiter looked relieved and hurried off, leaving the couple to themselves.

Pointedly ignoring the amused smirks Harry knew she was receiving from Neville and Luna – as well as the other couples watching them around the café – she sighed and pulled Draco back down to sit beside her, shaking her head at his antics.

Rolling her eyes, she gave him an irritated glare. “You really should keep a better hold on your temper, Malfoy. It’s the reason we got into so many detentions when we were kids. You kept exploding and tackling me. And quit calling me your woman, I’m not even a real woman in the first place.” She snapped but Draco merely chuckled and promptly wrapped a single arm around her shoulders, pulling her against him in a possessive gesture.

“I thought we already had this discussion about your gender, Potter. And about my temper, I was just using those fights then as an excuse to touch you and tackle you to the floor. Merlin, you should know by now that even when you were a guy, I couldn’t resist you.” He told her smugly, causing her to blush in spite of herself.

“Pervert.” She mumbled under her breath, causing Draco to laugh again and lean over to nuzzle her neck. She nudged him sharply away in embarrassment. “Quit that! People will stare and get the wrong idea about us, Malfoy!” She hissed but Draco just smirked at her, contenting himself by taking her hand and intertwining their fingers again.

“What are we anyway, Potter?” He asked pointedly, looking directly at her and clearly demanding an answer. When she couldn’t seem to give him a response, she avoided his eyes by staring at the table – blushing under his scrutinizing gaze.

She hadn’t realized how long she was trying to avoid his eyes until she looked up in surprise to see a new waiter arriving with their orders, to which she blinked in surprise.

Then, thankful at having any excuse to avoid Draco's hanging question, she picked up her fork and began shoving the pasta into her mouth, squirming in pleasure as she tasted the exquisite flavor. Draco watched her for a moment, amused at her reaction, before he turned to his own food and raised an eyebrow uncertainly in thought.

Seeing his expression, Jaimee rolled her eyes and reached her own fork over to twist the pasta around it, raising it up and gesturing for him to open his mouth.

"Potter, I will not have you feed me like a child! I don't even know if that fork is clean or—" He stopped when Harry had shoved the forkful of linguini into his mouth, causing him to stop midsentence and glare at her in annoyance as he reluctantly began to chew.

His annoyance, however, eventually gave way to surprise as he savored the food's amazingly unique and exquisite taste, causing Harry to laugh at the surprised expression on his handsome face. "I told you the food here was good, Draco. You didn't want to listen to me." She pointed out, smiling as she watched him continuing to savor the taste in thought.

Before he could answer her, she reached over and offered him a bite of her own food as well – laughing when this time, Draco opened his mouth immediately and let her feed him, his eyes lighting up in amazement again.

Still smiling, Jaimee reached over and used her thumb to slowly wipe away the smudge of sauce on his lips, blushing as Draco watched – with a heated gaze – as she brought her thumb to her own mouth and licked it off much like Draco had done during the debutante ball.

When his eyes remained focused intently on her lips, Harry coughed and looked away – breaking the awkward tension and causing the Slytherin to blink himself out of his thoughts. They both turned back to their food, enjoying the rest of their meal in silence.

What are we...?

His question seemed to continue to hanging over her thoughts for the rest of her meal and she struggled with herself for a coherent answer.

What are we...?

Draco couldn't answer his own question as they walked out of the restaurant about an hour later, their hands still tightly intertwined as they began making their way back towards the center of the village.

I've...Never felt this way about anyone before... He realized to himself, turning to glance briefly at the beautiful girl who was once Harry Potter beside him and noting, for the first time, how each time she smiled at him made him want to jump off the nearest tower in foolish happiness.

Seeing him returning her smile, Harry laughed and reached over to poke playfully at his dimple, causing him to laugh as well and bat her hand away.

She's...absolutely wonderful...Draco looked intently at her, his eyes unknowingly glazing over dreamily in thought as his gaze traveled from her green eyes, her bright smile to the way she was absolutely glowing in happiness.

And I want everything about her...I want to be with her...To get to know her... To be there for her...I want to...love—

“Magical Rollercoaster!”

Hearing her sudden excited exclamation, Draco blinked himself out of his thoughts and turned to face her, following her pointed finger up to see the large row of linked carts that was spiraling around high up in the air right above them.

Turning to face him, Harry gave him a pleading look. “The magical rollercoaster is open! Let's go, Draco! I've been waiting for that damn booth to open since this morning!” She rushed out excitedly, tugging impatiently on his hand.



Looking back up onto the dangerously spiraling and looping carts above them, Draco felt his stomach lurch in fear as he heard the screams emanating from them – along with the sounds of his premature death.

“Potter...Are you serious? We just ate! I—”

“Come on, Draco! Quit being such a girl” She exclaimed impatiently as she laughed and ran off, yanking him along with her and causing the Slytherin to groan out loud.

“I’m getting really sick of hearing you say that...”

“Fuck fuck fuck....”

Draco tightened his grip on the cart’s railings as they rollercoaster mounted higher and higher over thin air, causing his stomach to lurch over and over again in fear as he felt himself separated further from the ground.

Beside him, Harry was laughing loudly and throwing her arms up, cheering as she felt the wind caressing her face. Behind them, they could hear some of the other Hogwarts students cheering as well – catcalling and commenting on how high up they were climbing.

His knuckles white with the tightness of his grip, Draco dared to look down over the side of their cart and felt his breath hitch into his throat. He could no longer see the people down in the village and saw, instead, black ants moving about – causing his fear to mount even more.

At Harry’s insistence, they had sat in the very front cart of the rollercoaster and as it continued to rise up higher on its diagonal accent, getting ready to come crashing down towards the ground, Draco felt his heart beginning to pound even harder. He gulped loudly, turning to glare at the laughing Gryffindor beside him.

“Potter, this is all your fault! This isn’t fun...I do not want to die like this! Ugh, Merlin...I don’t feel well at all...” He grumbled, shutting his

eyes tightly but Jaimee grinned again and leaned over to take his hand in hers, giving it a firm squeeze.

“Open your eyes, Draco...Just...Let it go... Sometimes...It’s so much more fun to just...scream...and laugh... Sometimes, there’s just so much more to life to enjoy that you let yourself...Let me show you.” She told him softly, giving him a beautiful smile.

When he finally looked up and opened his eyes to meet hers, her smile softened and she leaned forward, pulling his face towards hers and catching his lips in a deep, passionate kiss. His heart pounding rapidly in his chest, Draco finally melted into the kiss and wrapped his own arms around her waist, pulling her closer against him and beginning to kiss her in matching intensity.

It was in that position that the rollercoaster finally stopped climbing, suspended itself in mid-air for a couple of seconds before it finally snapped into action and lurched forward, plummeting itself dangerously down towards the crowd and causing the crowd of students behind them to start screaming in a mixture of fear, excitement and suspense.

Feeling his stomach lurch, Draco pulled away and tightened his arms around Jaimee just as the both of them started laughing and screaming in exhilaration, leaning against each other in support and watching as the ground seemed to zoom closer and closer toward them.

Still giggling, she moved her arms up to wrap around his neck, pulling him closer until their foreheads were resting against each other and they could no longer see or hear anyone else – content on staring into each other’s eyes. Around them, students continued to scream and squeal as the rollercoaster began surging upwards into loops and spirals around the village, occasionally making sharp turns and lurches that caused the others to exclaim in surprise and glee.

Neither Draco nor Jaimee noticed, however, as Draco had leaned forward again and caught her lips in another deep, sweet kiss, his hands tightening around her and pulling her body close against his just as her hands pulled at his neck, allowing her to kiss him deeper.

His heart pounding harder than it ever had in his life and his stomach continuing lurching again and again as the rollercoaster they rode on continued on its sharp twists, spirals and turns, Draco couldn't bring himself to feel anything except the feeling of Jaimee's soft lips against his. Neither of them could tear themselves away, almost as though they were afraid of waking up from a dream as soon as their mouths separated from each other.

She moaned softly and opened her mouth to his tongue, surrendering herself completely to the onslaught as he tasted her hungrily, savoring every crevice of her mouth and addicting himself to her delicious flavor. He reached up and caressed her cheek softly, his chest aching with an unknown pain as he felt her trembling in his arms, causing his own to tighten protectively around her.

I... love you... He finally realized, feeling his heart bursting with such strong emotion that he had to force himself to pull back from the kiss and look intently into her eyes. He saw the same strong emotions in there that he knew was being reflected from his own.

He tried to bring himself to say the words out loud but all he found himself capable of doing was to stare at her, mesmerized by her exquisite beauty and the radiant glowing of her green eyes. Fortunately, she seemed to understand the conflicting emotions in his eyes and she just gave him a small smile before leaning her head down to rest it against his shoulder. Closing her eyes, she sighed contentedly and snuggled herself against him.

Draco managed a weak smile at that, his heart still aching painfully at his sudden realization and he settled for pulling her body closer against him instead, leaning down to plant a gentle kiss on her hair before sighing and resting his chin on the top of her head.

I understand now, Harry...

He held her like that in thoughtful silence for the remainder of the ride, the two of them being the only couple who seemed to remain silent and peaceful for the rest of the dangerous lurching and spirals the rollercoaster continued to make.

I love you...

“Do you...Sometimes wish you were still a guy?”

Blinking in surprise at the question, Jaimee stopped and turned around to face Draco's uncertain look, her eyes widening at the genuine curiosity in the Slytherin's eyes. Then, chuckling weakly to herself, she shrugged and answered him with a soft sigh.

“Sometimes, I suppose...Things were so much more different then. And a lot less complicated. But then again, I've never liked living my life based on regrets...If I did...Then I wouldn't have gotten anywhere after the war.” She spoke softly, watching as Draco nodded in understanding.

It was just late afternoon and the streets of Hogsmeade were now alight with softly glowing, yellow light emanating from the beautiful lampposts situated around the village – casting a romantic glow around the area. The two of them were now walking hand in hand through some of the smaller stalls of the fair, pausing every now and then to peer at some of the stuff being sold as well as chatting to some of the other students they had seen along the way – including Blaise, Ron, Hermione and Lorraine.

As soon as Blaise had seen the peaceful look in Draco's eyes and the way his hands were intertwined very tightly with Jaimee's, Blaise had smirked knowingly at him and had given him a wink, causing Draco to glare warningly at him in irritation.

Smiling, he stopped again and turned to look at her with a weird expression in his eyes, causing her to blink and raise an eyebrow at him in query. “I think... I still would have ended up pursuing you had you been a guy...” He mused, causing Jaimee to blink again and burst out laughing in disbelief.

“You wouldn't have dared, Malfoy...You're a pureblooded heir...Your family would have killed you for being gay.” She pointed out and Draco smirked smugly, shaking his head in disagreement.

“Bisexual, actually. And to be honest...I don't even know if I really was bisexual... I like women. The only reason I thought I was bisexual was because I have always been attracted to you. All other men, however...Made me cringe in disgust.” He mused to himself, causing Jaimee to blush at his words.

“Why didn't you just tell me...?” She asked, looking at him but at that, Draco winced to himself and shook his head fiercely. “And then what? Have you laugh in my face for liking my supposed rival? Besides, you weren't exactly free either. You were pretty busy dating Chang...Then the Weasel girl... Then Granger...Then a bunch of other annoying women.” He pointed out and at this, Harry had the temerity to blush.

“Her name is Ginny, Draco...And you weren't exactly innocent either. You changed girlfriends faster than Hermione read through books. And mind you, you didn't exactly build up a good reputation while you were at it either.” She pointed out but Draco just shrugged, stopping briefly to inspect a booth of cloaks before moving on ahead and chuckling to himself.

“I was a child, Potter. I was experimenting...Frankly; I was disturbed at my attraction to you so I tried to get over it by being with as many women as I possibly could. It didn't work, of course. You were always there with your damn noble stance and damn beautiful eyes, you drove me crazy.” He admitted, once again causing the Gryffindor to blush.

“But...Why me..?” She asked softly and this time, Draco stopped and turned to give her a small, tender smile. “Why not? You're everything I ever wanted...Beautiful...Smart...Strong...Powerful... You never hide anything about yourself. You have such fierce spirit and courage. You're everything I wish I could be. How could I not want you...?” He spoke softly, his eyes penetrating deep into hers and seemingly leaving the rest of his thoughts unspoken in their depths.

Seeing the intense look in his eyes, she shivered and turned away, unsure of how she was supposed to react. Then, forcing a laugh, she looked up and gave him a teasing smile. “Wish you could be? Have you not seen yourself, Draco? Do you not realize how all the girls in this school are absolutely crazy about you? It was irritating...When I

was a guy, it was damn hard to compete with you for the female population of the school. They all wanted in your pants..." She pointed out, smirking to herself at the memory.

When Draco seemed to shrug, she continued to speak. "You're bloody gorgeous, Malfoy. Infuriatingly so, I might add. Most of all, you are without a doubt, the most intelligent and most charismatic student in our year. You have got everything going for you. I don't understand how you could want anything else." She blurted out, blushing at her own admission as she felt Draco smirking at her from where he was standing underneath one of the lampposts.

"I want you..."

Her breath hitched into her throat at his words and she froze, her heart beating very painfully against her chest. Forcing a laugh, she shook her head and gave him a nervous smile in an attempt to brush away the heatedness of the moment.

"S—Stop saying stuff like that, Draco! It really makes me uncomfortable! B—Besides—"

"Is it so wrong to want you, Harry...?" He spoke softly, walking up behind her and ignoring the blush on her face as wrapped his arms around her waist, pulling her against him until her back was resting against his chest.

"I—I don't know, Draco. Maybe I want something more than that." She responded evenly, thoroughly surprised to hear her voice sounding firm and not the shaky whisper she thought it would come out as amidst her nervousness.

In spite of himself, Draco smiled at her words – understanding now more than ever what she wanted him to say. "What is it you want, Harry? Anything it is, I'll give it to you." He told her, leaning down to kiss her gently against her soft cheek.

She sighed, closing her eyes and inhaling his enticing, familiar scent.

“I...I want...I want you to—”

“Pictures? You two seem like such a lovely, perfect couple! Would you like to try out our booth and take some pictures of yourselves?!” A sudden low-pitched voice interrupted, causing both teenagers to jump apart and turn around in time to see a middle-aged man rushing up to them and ushering them into his booth.

Highly irritated at the unwelcome interruption, Draco growled loudly to himself and he was just about to tell the annoying man to shove off when Jaimee suddenly grinned at seeing the booth behind her, causing the Slytherin to stop himself and sigh in anticipation.

“It’s one of those muggle...picture contraption things! I haven’t seen one of these in years!” She exclaimed, inspecting the weird looking device and turning to Draco with another one of her wide smiles. Unfortunately for the Malfoy heir, he was unable to deny her anything when she gave him that look and he turned to the person manning the booth, raising an eyebrow in query.

“How much...? And how does it work?” He asked, restraining himself from rolling his eyes when the man grinned widely. He gestured for them to enter the rectangular muggle contraption, from behind, escorting them into a small cramped space where a single stool rested in the middle and a small monitor was positioned in front, allowing them to see their images on the screen.

“It’s two galleons per strip of pictures. You just sit down here and look directly at the lens right over there.” The man explained, pointing to a small circular lens just below the monitor. “The monitor will give you signal when it’s going to take your pictures – it takes around seven shots. One after every thirty seconds.” He added further, causing Harry to grin in excitement.

“It isn’t like the muggle photo booth however because the pictures will be taken by a magical camera so they’ll still be Wizarding photographs in the end. Once you’re done, the strip of pictures will come out through here after around five minutes.” He pointed to a small dispenser round the side of the muggle machine.

“The pictures are rather small – about palm-sized – but they’re really well-developed. In fact, I’ve already had about twenty five couples have their pictures taken today alone. You guys are the twenty sixth. Hunting season must really be going well this year.” The man commented cheerfully, causing Draco to scoff in spite of himself.

Before the man could say anything else, he lazily took out his wallet and paid him the amount due to which the man smiled again and indicated for them to enter the contraption before excusing himself and making his way around the back to start up the camera.

Unsure of how to proceed seeing as there was only one stool, Draco rolled his eyes at Jaimee’s hesitation and strode forward, planting himself down onto the seat with a grin. Before she could react, he yanked her toward him and placed her on his lap, using the same move to wrap his arms contentedly around her waist.

When she laughed and didn’t seem to mind his actions, Draco wrapped his arms tighter around her and gave her a mischievous grin, causing her eyebrows to lift up in query.

“What?” She asked suspiciously, narrowing her eyes at his smirk but Draco just grinned wider, shaking his head at her expression.

“So...seven shots, huh...?”

SHOT 1

“Where are we supposed to stare again?” Harry asked, peering around the room in confusion as saw the monitor flashing, indicating for them to ready their pose. Draco, however, merely shrugged and chuckled to himself before leaning up and pressing his lips sensually against hers, one hand moving to wrap around her waist and another moving to squeeze her arse.

FLASH!

“MALFOY!”

SHOT 2



Draco held back a round of mirthful laughter as he watched Jaimee stick out her tongue and cross her eyes, to which he responded to by twisting his own face into a horribly uncharacteristic open mouthed growl, causing another snort of laughter to erupt from the girl on his lap.

FLASH!

SHOT 3

“I will not put that on!”

Jaimee struggled to secure her magically conjured Gryffindor tie around Draco’s neck, all the while indicating to the Slytherin tie she herself had on. “I’m wearing Slytherin, you wear Gryffindor! Come on, Malfoy! It’s just a tie!” She protested and Draco struggled wildly against her, twisting and turning his head away from her in their seat.

“ARGH! That’s it, Malfoy! I am going to choke with it!” She snapped angrily and promptly proceeded to do so, causing the Slytherin to end up gasping for air.

FLASH!

SHOT 4

“My name is Professor Snape...I am the Potions teacher at Hogwarts...And I have a wand stuck up my big hairy arse...” Harry intoned in a Snape-like, biting drawl – her hair charmed similar to Snape’s own greasy short hair and her nose charmed large enough to match the potions master’s hooked nose.

“Weee! Look at me, I’m Professor Dumbledore and I’m gay and I like to dance around in my underwear when no one’s watching! Woohoo! I’m a smarmy, dingy old fart!” Draco mocked in a

ridiculously high, falsetto voice – his blonde hair charmed long and white while a scruffy old beard was attached to his chin.

Harry couldn't help herself – she burst out laughing at Draco's ridiculous imitation and with that, Draco followed suit, the two of them shaking in absolute hilarity.

FLASH!

SHOT 5

"Oooh... I'm Harry Potter. I'm the savior of the Wizarding World...All of you want to bow down and worship me because I'm so great and powerful!" Draco mocked, his hair charmed black, a fake lightning bolt scar on his forehead and a pair of thick, square-framed glasses on his face.

Glaring at him, a now silver blonde-haired Jaimee, her hair slicked back from her face, gave a horribly evil sneer and pretended to cackle in response. "Hey Potty! You think you're so darn special don't you?! Well look at me! I'm Draco Malfoy and I'm the bloody prince of Slytherin! Everyone is terrified of me and you should be too!" She drawled in a very Draco-like voice, causing Draco's eyes to widen in surprise.

FLASH!

"Hey that was actually pretty good...Do you practice that?" Draco asked, turning to look at her as Jaimee reddened but nodded sheepishly.

"Used to mock you all the time in front of the other Gryffindors."

"...Oh."

SHOT 6

"Hahaha—Potter, I demand you cease that at once! Stop it!"

Harry was laughing as she wrestled with a frantically laughing Draco who was desperately trying to fight back against her tickling onslaught. Trying—and horribly failing—to control his laughter, Draco shook his head fiercely, shoving her hands away.

“Malfoy, you’re so adorable!” She teased, purposely emphasizing his most hated word and causing Draco’s eyes to widen in horror.

“I AM NOT ADORABLE—”

FLASH!

He was still trying to struggle with her tickling and at the sound of the flash; Draco’s eyes had filled with indignation before he lost himself in his tickle-induced laughter again.

“ARGH! Hahaha – POTTER!”

SHOT 7

Jaimee finally leaned back against Draco in exhaustion, allowing him to wrap his arms around her waist as her back pressed against his chest. Smiling to herself, she placed her own hands over the ones he had around her and caressed his fingers, closing her eyes as she felt him lean down and nuzzle her neck from behind.

Feeling the Gryffindor melt against him, Draco smiled to himself and leaned down to give her a sweet kiss on her cheek, his lips lingering tenderly over her face.

FLASH!

Neither of them heard the last shot being taken.

A/N: Kawaii! I personally think Harry and Draco were ridiculously cute in this chapter but that’s just me. All that changes in the next chapter however... Things will definitely spice up and get hot and heavy... If you know what I mean. :smirk: And to compensate for my long absence, the next chapter will be up within the next couple of days!

I'm just about finished with it, I only need to type out one last scene and do final editing and I'll post it as soon as I can.

Oh and for those of you who are excited as to when exactly things will get...physical...between the two, alas. The wait is over. :smirks suggestively and raises her eyebrows up and down: Unfortunately, since this site has strict guidelines about ratings, I will be explaining in the next chapter as to how you guys can read it. :wink:

Next Chapter: Continuation of date, a tour of Draco's dormitory...Other stuff. :chuckles:

So before I post the next chapter, as always, don't forget to leave me a REVIEW!

## Chapter 23 – Jigsaw Puzzle

A couple of minutes later, the both of them exited the picture booth, laughing at each other's poses and appearance as they stared at the strip of pictures they held in their hands. Every now and then, they would stop, point at the picture and make some teasing comment about how ridiculous the other looked or was acting. Neither of them failed to notice the rather growing group of young bachelors that had spotted them from a couple of feet away when they exited the booth – all of which were now heading straight for them.

"You look like an idiot in this one, Potter. I can't believe they call you prime debutante." Draco teased with a smirk as he pointed to their second picture, causing Harry to hit him lightly on the shoulder. "You're no prince charming in that picture either, Malfoy. You look like a—"

"Jillian Aimee Potter?"

Stopping herself midsentence, Jaimee immediately froze and cringed to herself in suspicion before she sighed and slowly turned around. She groaned loudly when she found herself facing the small crowd of bachelors gathered behind her.

Not now...She thought, cursing to herself in frustration.

Seeing the expression on her face, Draco stiffened and turned around as well – his face transforming into a venomous sneer and his hand moving to pull out his wand from his pocket. Sensing the obvious threat, he moved to step in front of her, shielding her from the crowd of smirking men behind them.

"Yes...?" Jaimee asked cautiously, her voice laced with an exasperated tone. Inspecting the crowd before her, she quickly concluded that not all of them were from Hogwarts – only about less than half of them – and the rest were from outside. She didn't recognize most of them but she gathered they had come specifically to Hogsmeade during that weekend to challenge her and that fact alone irritated her even more.

One of the men in front, a handsome dark-haired, blue-eyed wizard wearing an elegant black cloak stepped forward, bowing formally to her in acknowledgement. When she waved the gesture away, he raised himself up and gave her a smirk.

“We wish to challenge you to a magical combat—”

“This is a breach of conduct! Can’t you see that she’s with me right now? Don’t you bastards have any respect for tradition at all?” Draco snapped in frustration, stepping forward and shoving the boy away from her in outrage.

“Malfoy, I can handle this!” Harry snapped irritably, trying to pull Draco aside behind her but the Slytherin ignored her and angrily shrugged her arm off, taking another step forward and setting himself right in between Jaimee and the festering crowd of men before them.

The cloaked bachelor didn’t seem to take too kindly to having been shoved and he steadied himself, his face now curling itself into a hideous, unwelcome snarl directed towards Draco. “You old pureblooded family heirs. Always such a stickler for tradition. Why don’t you pull your wand out of your pompous—”

He never got to finish his sentence as without warning – before Jaimee could even react – Draco had surged forward and slammed his fist right into the other bachelor’s jaw, causing the boy to stumble backwards in alarm and pain.

Most of the other bachelors seemed shocked at his violent display and they blinked in surprise before glaring indignantly at Draco, clenching their fists and pulling their wands out of their robes in intimidation.

Seeing the deadly expression in their eyes and the way they all seemed to be readying battle stance – including the cloaked bachelor Draco had just punched – Harry frantically pulled Draco aside, clasping his hand tightly in hers.

“Draco?”

At the panicked tone of her voice, Draco finally turned to face her, noting at once the mixture of nervousness, anxiety and exhilaration in her bright green eyes.

“What?”

Squeezing his hand, Jaimee turned to flash the looming crowd of huge hulking bachelors behind them a helpless, sheepish smile. All of them ignored this and continued to approach them in a painstakingly slow and intimidating pace, their wands held tightly in their hands. Gulping, she gave a nervous laugh before turning once more to Draco beside her, squeezing and tugging on his hand.

“Run!”

It took Draco about three full seconds to process what she had said before he found himself being dragged forcefully behind her as Jaimee broke out into a run towards the opposite direction of the village. Struggling to keep up with her, he yanked his hand away and ran beside her, giving her an exasperated look of annoyance.

“Why the hell are we running?! We could have taken them on! There were only about eight of them!” He argued as they rounded the corner, running towards the restaurant sector of the village.

“Them, we could have taken on. The crowd behind them, on the other hand, I’m not so sure.” She pointed out, running faster as they pushed their way through several startled couples on the street who were heading for the opposite direction.

Blinking in confusion, Draco slowed his pace down briefly to peer over his shoulder just in time to see the much larger crowd of about more than twenty bachelors who were now visible behind the initial crowd that had approached them. Both crowds were now chasing after them.

Draco’s eyes widened in alarm.

“Mother of—” He broke his own horrified sentence and began to run faster, cursing under his breath as he nearly rammed himself into a

Hufflepuff third year couple in front of them. "You and your stupid ideas, Potter! This wouldn't have happened if you hadn't issued that bloody challenge in the first place!" He complained as he shoved past them, shooting her another glare as they rounded another corner and began running towards the shopping sector.

She screeched at his words, turning her head briefly to give him a death glare. "My fault?! This never would have happened if you hadn't turned me into a bloody woman in the first place! I never wanted this!" She retorted, yelping and ducking as a stunning spell from behind flew above her head.

Draco cursed as he ducked the hex aimed at him before turning to return her glare with an indignant sneer. "I said I was sorry for that, Potter! How many times must I apologize for that accident?! I'm getting rather sick of you blaming me all the damn time!" He snapped at her, wincing when he nearly crashed himself into another walking couple on the street.

Jaimee growled loudly at this, her eyes narrowing in anger. "Well no one asked you to punch that bachelor back there like a stupid, reckless idiot! I might have been able to talk to him!" She yelled back, her eyes flashing in irritation at his words. He gave her another sneer, his voice dripping with sarcasm as he spoke.

"Oh yeah! They sure looked like a bunch that seemed open to talk, Potter. I swear, you are so damn ignorant that you wouldn't see danger if it danced naked in front of your—"

He stopped his sarcastic tirade when Harry suddenly burst out laughing, causing Draco's anger to flare up even more as he turned to her in shock. The Gryffindor girl was laughing hysterically and struggling to breathe and run at the same time.

"What the bloody hell is so funny, Potter?!" He raged, swerving just in time to avoid colliding with a group of Ravenclaw girls making their way out of a shop. They shrieked and dropped their shopping bags in surprise as he swerved around them, causing Jaimee to laugh even harder at the hilarity of the whole scene.



“Th—This is! Y—You and me...Right here...Running like hell from a pack of men! Hahaha! I—It’s just...It’s just so hilarious!” She managed to wheeze out, her shoulders shaking in mirth as she ducked just in time to avoid another hex aimed directly at her head from behind.

“You stupid Gryffindor! Of all the asinine things you involve yourself in—”

“Shhh! In here!” She suddenly whispered, interrupting his haughty drawl as she yanked his hand and pulled him sharply into a very narrow opening in the back alley of a clothes shop, shoving him into it before squeezing herself in after him.

Draco would have complained further about the uncomfortable crampedness of their supposed hiding place but Jaimee held a finger up to her lips, indicating for him to keep silent as they both heard the heavy footsteps of the crowd thudding around them.

“Where did they go?! They couldn’t have gotten far!”

At this, Draco kept silent – glaring darkly at Jaimee in the darkness of the alley as they waited for the heavy footsteps to fade away. Seeing the expression on his face, she bit her lip to keep from laughing once more at their situation, hastily covering her mouth with her hand.

“You really think this is funny, don’t you?!” Draco hissed softly at her, his eyes narrowing as he watched her desperately trying to hold in her giggles. At the expression on his face, she let out a soft snort of laughter and frantically shook her head, biting back her giggles as they heard another group of bachelors hovering near them.

“Maybe they went off inside the shops! Let’s go!”

As soon as they heard the thundering of heavy footsteps fading off into silence, Draco found himself staring awkwardly at her as the both of them suddenly grew aware of how their bodies were pressed tightly against each other in the small cramped space. Then – as though she had just realized this as well – Harry immediately stopped

laughing and turned a deep red, her eyes dropping down from his to the ground.

“Interesting choice of a hiding place, Potter...” Draco drawled slowly, one corner of his lips quirking into a sexy smirk as he gently tipped her chin up to meet his smoldering gaze. Seeing those silver orbs darkening with evident lust, she flushed even darker and laughed nervously, trying to break through the sexual tension.

“I think they’re gone now, Draco. Let’s go. We should probably head on back up to the castle while we still can.” She rushed out shakily, trying to turn her head away from him. Draco merely shook his head before he smirked and leaned down, pressing his lips sensuously against her neck.

Gasping at the intimate contact, she tried to push him away but he pressed himself tighter against her and she closed her eyes, biting back a moan when he began nipping and sucking at the skin just above her shoulder. Just as she felt an uncomfortable heat enveloping her entire form, they were broken out of their intimate activity when they heard a rather loud exclamation a couple of feet away from them.

“There she is! I found her, they’ve over here!”

They broke apart, cursing loudly and their hands going to dive for the wand tucked inside their jackets. Turning for a split second to meet the determined glint in the other’s eyes, they nodded to one another in agreement before smirking and simultaneously lunging out of their hiding place into the crowd of men gathered around them.

Growling in frustration, Harry launched herself into a group of tall, burly wizards in front of her and aimed her wand directly at them, sending them hurling backwards with a powerful gust of wind. One of them managed to evade the attack and retaliated by aiming his wand at her, a sudden burst of fire erupting from its tip and aiming for her face.

Gasping in shock at the quickness of the attack, she failed to conjure a proper shielding spell and she desperately covered her face with

her hands instead, closing her eyes at the sure pain that was to follow. When it didn't seem to come, she blinked her eyes open just in time to see Draco slashing his wand sharply through the air towards her direction, a beam of red light emanating from it and wrapping itself around her form, effectively shielding her from the fire.

Before she had the time to thank him, she yelped as a dark-haired boy had suddenly seized her from behind, wrapping one arm tightly around her neck and another around her waist. Struggling to breathe, she wrestled wildly with him as he began dragging her roughly backwards away from Draco and the other men.

Seeing this, Draco's eyes widened and he tried to chase after her but he found himself swarmed with another set of wizards who began attacking him physically all at the same time. Growling under his breath, he was forced to defend himself –his attention drawn away from Jaimee's struggling to his own fighting.

At this point, Jaimee had managed to twist herself free from her captor's grasp, hurled him up over her and slammed him down onto the ground, aiming her wand directly into his face.

"Somnus." She muttered and immediately, the boy's eyes widened for a split second before closing as he fell into a rather peaceful sleep. Rubbing at the soreness of her neck, Harry looked back up just in time to see Draco land a particularly painful, wind-propelled kick towards the group in front of him, causing many of the bachelors to stumble backwards in pain.

"A little help here, Potter!" He yelled irritably at her, reassuming his fighting stance and backing slowly away toward her as several of the fallen wizards began picking themselves off the ground, clutching their jaws in pain and glaring menacingly at Draco.

"Here!" She raced toward him and linked both their hands tightly, her eyes narrowing in thought as she waited for the bachelors around them to approach the right distance. Their backs pressed against each other, they kept a cautious stance as the crowd of angry nameless bachelors began to close in on them in a tight circle.

“On my signal...” She yelled out loud, her muscles tensing with anticipation as she felt Draco’s fingers squeeze hers tightly in agreement. “One...Two...”

“Give it up, Potter! Women like you deserved to be tamed.” The sneering cloaked wizard spoke harshly, his face twisted into an ugly snarl as he finally lunged forward and aimed to clutch tightly at her throat.

“THREE! GO!”

Draco heaved a breath of exertion before he easily lifted Jaimee with both hands and supported her as she spun both her legs around them in a circle, successfully knocking down most of the men around them and clearing a path for them to break through.

As he set her back down, she looked around them and let out a half-laugh, half-cheer and before turning to seize Draco by the hand, hastily pulling him away from the crowd.

“Draco, let’s go!” She urged frantically, indicating for him to follow her. Draco gave the last bachelor standing a sharp blow to the face, knocking him down with the others and smirked smugly before finally allowing her to drag him away from the wreckage.

As they raced back hand in hand to the castle, shoving past bewildered students and couples as they passed, Harry began giggling under her breath again and this time, Draco found himself beginning to laugh with her, shaking his head at what had just happened.

“Life’s never a dull moment with you is it, Harry? I can’t believe the escapades you put me through...” He spoke softly, turning and giving the girl running beside him a genuine smile.

She grinned widely at his quip, shrugging in response just as the Hogwarts Castle finally came into view. As they approached the castle together, the two of them slowed down in exhaustion, their laughter eventually dying out. They walked towards the entrance in

silence; their cheeks tinged with a soft shade of pink, their hands linked and their fingers comfortably intertwined.

“So...This is the exclusive Head Boy’s room, huh...?” Harry commented cheekily as she walked around the large, spacious dormitory room in amazement – taking in the clean white walls, pale green curtains, beautifully kept furniture and the expensive paintings that hung around them.

From the entrance, Draco leaned one shoulder smugly against the doorframe, crossing his arms over his chest and crossing one ankle behind the other. He surveyed her reaction with a smirk on his face.

Glancing further around the room, she noted, with a mild cringe of self-embarrassment, that the room was entirely spotless and obsessively neat. Every single object was in place and every single throw pillow was arranged in equal distances from each other on the couch – something that seemed to be the complete opposite of the pig sty she would often refer to as her room.

Her eyes moving to inspect the tall and wide bookshelves adorning the walls, she winced once more as she noticed the hordes of books he seemed to have read – each one arranged perfectly on each shelf from small and thin to thick, large and hardbound. Moving her eyes up further, she rolled her eyes when she eyed the walls adorned with countless awards and medals, along with the top shelves which were filled with a handful of trophies.

Arrogant prick...I bet he brought me in here specifically to show off. Does he think I’m going to praise him? I don’t think so. I could almost see his smirk behind me right now. She thought childishly to herself, scowling in self-consciousness at herself.

In contrast to her thoughts, however, Draco was actually grinning behind her, watching in amusement as she pointedly rolled her eyes and shrugged at his accomplishments. He shook his head at amazement. It made him smile that she seemed not to take his accomplishments so seriously as compared to most of the other girls who had seen his trophies and melted on the spot, adoring him like brainless idiots. Instead, Jaimee had rolled her eyes before turning to

walk into the adjoining study room, biting back another groan when she noticed his neatness once again.

His study room was much simpler and seemed less cramped than she remembered Hermione's had been in her Head Girl dormitory. In contrast to the thick piles of books and stacks of parchment that lined the table and floor of Hermione's, Draco's study room consisted of a single study desk, a lamp beside a comfy reading couch and a small fireplace. The books and parchment on his desk were neatly arranged in proper order and beside them was an ink bottle, a beautiful feather quill and surprisingly enough, a pair of elegant, thin-wired silver glasses.

"You wear glasses...?" She asked, turning around to look at him in surprise. Seeing her raised eyebrows, Draco gave her a sheepish grin from where he still stood leaning against the entrance. "Ah...Now you know my dirty little secret, Potter." He teased, shaking his head in amusement.

Seeing her laughing, he shrugged and finally walked into the dormitory, waving his wand briefly behind him to shut the entrance before turning to sit down on one of the pale green couches in the living room. "I only wear them at night, actually...When my eyes are really tired; I need them to read so that I don't strain myself. Otherwise, I'm fine without them." He told her, watching her nod in understanding before walking further into the next room.

She blushed when she realized she had entered his bedroom and she was just about to walk back out when Draco walked up to the doorway just behind her, his arms going to wrap around her waist as he leaned down and pressed a soft kiss on her neck.

"This...Is the bedroom." He whispered sensually into her ear, nipping briefly at her earlobes as she shivered and stepped away hastily from him, masking her nervousness with a laugh. She stepped further into the room and pretended to inspect it intently.

"Hmm...Not bad, Malfoy. You're pretty fond of fireplaces, aren't you?" She observed, indicating another fireplace in front of the large, luxurious four poster bed lined with pale green silk sheets.

"I like to keep myself warm at night...Yes..." He responded evenly, his eyes still focused intently on her as the suggestive meaning in his words seemed to make her stiffen again. Instead of answering him, she turned to preoccupy herself with looking around again.

Aside from another set of pale green curtains that matched the silk sheets of his bed and another large book shelf in the corner, there were no other furniture in his room and she raised an eyebrow at his, clearly intrigued.

Seeing the question in her eyes, he chuckled and leaned against the doorframe again, giving her a handsome smirk. "I told you, Harry... I'm a simple guy. I don't like too much furniture in places where they're not needed." He told her, shaking her head at her obvious disbelief.

"I suppose...Wait, is this your closet —" She didn't bother waiting for him to answer as she opened the adjoining door near the fireplace and found herself walking into a room that was almost as large as his bedroom filled with expensive clothing and accessories. She caught a glimpse of the stupid, gaping expression on her own face in the large, full-length mirror beside her before she stepped back out, shaking her head in dismay.

"Merlin's beard, Malfoy...Your 'simplicity' doesn't seem to extend to clothes. You probably have four times as many clothes as I do!" She mused and at that, Draco seemed to frown and he straightened himself, shaking his head in disapproval.

"Those aren't all my clothes, Potter. I left the rest back home... I could only bring this much to school. And really? Well then that's something we'll have to remedy... I would love to buy you as many clothes as possible and dress you up to be the goddess you are." He drawled, smirking at her but she reddened and shook her head hastily, looking at him as though he were insane.

"Wh—What? I hardly need clothes, Draco. I've got more than enough on my own. I don't want you or anybody for that matter dressing me up, that just wouldn't be me, I—"

“Have you really no bloody idea how gorgeous you are, Harry...?” He asked with another smirk, shaking his head at her ignorance. She colored again, trying in vain to think of something to say in response but Draco had already walked forward and suddenly pushed her into his closet, causing her to struggle against him briefly in alarm.

“What are you doing?! L—Let me go, Malfoy! If you think for one second that—”

She stopped when he positioned them in front of the full-length mirror, peering over her shoulder at their reflection from behind her. Smirking to himself, he gently turned her chin, allowing her to see her own reflection and observe the confused, slightly trembling expression on her own face.

“What—”

“Do you not see yourself, Harry...? You are...so...beautiful...Look.” He whispered into her ear, his eyes lifting up to meet hers through their reflections. As she stared at him through the mirror, she admired could help but admire the perfect picture they made – Draco with his silver blonde hair, and silver eyes complimenting her own dark hair and big, bright green eyes.

While his eyes seemed cold and unreadable and his sneer was harsh and confident, her eyes were expressive – filled with distinct warmth – and the expression on her face was neither a smile nor a smirk but was one of nervousness. Biting her lip, she swallowed the lump in her throat and watched as he reached up and unclasped the tie around her hair, bringing the midnight strands cascading down her back.

He leaned down and buried his face into her hair, inhaling the sweet scent and threading his fingers through the soft strands. One of his hands wrapped itself tightly, almost tenderly against her waist and another went up into her shirt and caressed the smooth skin of her flat stomach. His fingers on her skin were so fleeting and gentle that they would have tickled had she not been so nervous. At this point, Jaimee’s heart was pounding so rapidly against her chest that it was



beginning to be painful and she took a step away from him, shaking her head and pulling herself out of his arms.

“I—I better go, Draco... It’s getting rather late. I wouldn’t want to get locked out of my dormitory again...I...don’t want the guys worrying.” She reasoned lamely, her cheeks flaming as she made her way around him and reached for the door.

Just as she had turned the knob and opened the door, Draco’s hand shot out and grabbed very tightly at her wrist. She froze mid-action and turned to him in shock. Seeing the Slytherin’s own flushed cheeks and his eyes burning with desire, she took another step back, unsure of what to say to him.

“Then stay here tonight...Harry...”

His voice trailed off but she knew the hidden meaning behind his words. She knew the look in his eyes – the same look in every man’s eyes when they were drunk with passion, wanton with longing. After seventeen years as a man, she knew that look so well and it scared her that she found herself on the receiving end of it right now – scared her so much that she wanted to run away because she didn’t know how she was supposed to respond to it.

“I’m not sure that’s such a good idea, Draco...” She whispered softly in response, recalling the night of the debutante ball. “You...Said it yourself...It wouldn’t be right...” She sighed and shook her head, hating the way his eyes were making her resolve melt.

She tore her gaze from his and turned away, attempting to walk out of the closet again but Draco only seemed to hold onto her hand tighter, shaking his head stubbornly at her answer.

“I don’t care about what’s right anymore! I don’t even know anything about what I’m feeling right now! I’m just as confused as you are about all this...I can’t tell you anything for certain, Harry! I know nothing!” He insisted, tugging harder against her arm and looking deep into her eyes once more.

She met them this time, watching the flurry of emotions running across his face and listening intently to his words.

“All I know is this...” His voice trailed off again and he sighed, running his other hand through his hair in frustration. Taking a deep breath, he steeled his nerves and looked back at her, meeting her eyes.

“I want you. Every part of you.”

His words melted something inside her and she forced her free hand into a tight fist, desperately trying to keep a firm hold over her senses. She wanted to throw herself into his arms and kiss him – whether or not it made any sense at all. She wanted to melt against him and love him.

But she didn't.

Instead, she listened – both scared and hopeful as to what he wanted to say.

Draco shook his head at himself before taking another deep breath and stepping right up to her until their lips were mere inches apart. Then, his voice dropping to a soft, barely audible whisper, he began to speak.

“I...Harry, I...”

Harry's eyes widened and her heart seemed to stop beating for that split second as she waited with bated breath for the right words to spill from his mouth.

“I...”

I love you.

“I...”

I love you.

“I...”

I love you, Harry!

Draco shook his head at himself in helplessness, his entire form trembling as he tried to force the words out.

"I...Harry, I..."

But the words simply refuse to come and in self-frustration, he swallowed painfully and he finally let go of her wrist to bury his face into his hands, overwhelmed and disgraced at his own weakness. In front of him, the hopeful glow in Jaimee's eyes eventually dimmed and her face fell, filling with a deep regret and disappointment.

Giving him a sad smile, she finally nodded in understanding before turning slowly and finally walking out of the closet, leaving Draco staring after her in helpless silence and with a defeated look on his features. As soon as she had left the bedroom and he heard her making her way towards the entrance of his dormitory, Draco cursed weakly at himself, walking out of the closet and sinking down onto his bed in frustration.

You idiot! She was right there and you couldn't say it! Why didn't you just tell her?! What the bloody hell are you so afraid of you stupid coward?! He screamed at himself, repeatedly punching his bed several times before he finally let out a growl of frustration and buried his face under his pillow.

You wuss! You don't deserve her. His own mocking voice echoed in his head and he tried to block it out by yanking the pillow the tighter around his ears, cursing out loud to himself in anger.

Tossing the pillow across the room, he leaned back and stared up at the ceiling in thought, trying to process over and over again in his head the events that had just happened and all that he had done wrong. Then, as though it had just hit him, he suddenly sat up, his eyes going wide with realization.

"What the hell am I doing?! I should be chasing after her!" He snapped angrily at himself before he finally bolted up from his bed

and raced out of the bedroom. Muttering darkly under his breath about his own stupidity, he hurriedly grabbed his wand and made to head out the exit.

Just as he had raised his wand to open the door, however, the wall had swung open and he froze in shock, his eyes going wide with surprise and his heart jumping into his throat. He stood there, disbelief clearly written on his face as Jaimee walked back nervously into the room, a soft, uncertain smile on her face.

Seeing him standing there and gaping uncharacteristically like an idiot, she raised an eyebrow at him, one corner of her lips lifting teasingly into a weak, impish grin. She gestured to the couch behind him, laughing sheepishly.

“I...Uhm...I forgot my jacket...”

Draco’s face fell but he took a step back to retrieve it, nodding wordlessly and handing the jacket back to her. For a long awkward moment, her eyes rested thoughtfully on the jacket in his offered hand. Then, after what seemed like an eternity, she finally reached out and took it – her fingers brushing against his.

He forced himself to speak, looking up to meet her beautiful green eyes.

“Harry...I...”

The words immediately died when she reached up and pressed a finger gently against his lips, indicating for him to stop. Then, tossing her jacket back onto the couch, she stepped right up to him and caught his lips in a deep, passionate kiss, pressing her body firmly against his and her arms going to wrap firmly around his neck.

Draco had taken a step backwards in surprise but he recovered immediately by raising his wand and slamming the entrance shut. Then, feeling her melting against him, he hurled the wand across the room before finally wrapping his arms tightly around her waist.

Her kiss was filled with a fiery passion and hunger and he felt himself incredibly aroused, biting back a low moan when her impatient hands began fumbling frantically along his shoulders and slipping under his shirt to caress the muscles on his stomach.

She opened her mouth, allowing him to taste her and moaning when he kissed her with a rough, demanding urgency that spoke clearly of all he wanted to take. Like hers, his hands began roaming her body—one hand slipping into her shirt and massaging her breast while another slipped behind her and squeezed her arse.

Her hands dropped down hurriedly to the belt around his waist and began unclasping it with surprising speed, yanking it from his pants and hurling it to the floor. She gasped when he had broken the kiss and leaned down to the curve of her shoulder, biting hard enough to draw blood and to leave a small mark on the pale skin.

When he caught her lips in another hard bruising kiss, she slipped her hands underneath his shirt again and hurriedly began tugging it off, breaking the kiss just once as the shirt slipped over his head before she allowed him to assault her lips once more.

Reveling at the smoothness yet firmness of his bare skin, she eagerly traced the muscles of his stomach and chest, reveling in the soft hiss of pleasure he emitted at the intimate contact. Pulling away from the kiss, she leaned down and began to lick and nip at the sensitive spot just below his collarbone, fully aware of the hardening between his legs.

Biting back the urge to shove her up against the wall and taking her right there, he reached behind her and jerked her head up roughly by yanking a fistful of her hair, muffling the whimper of pain that escaped her lips with a deep kiss. When his hands moved down to wrap around her waist and began to tug upwards, she obliged by wrapping her hands around his neck for support and allowing him to lift her, wrapping her legs around his waist.

Their lips never breaking contact and their tongues still battling fiercely with one another, Draco carried her backwards blindly, moving impatiently towards his bedroom and stopping only to shut

the door tightly behind them before heading toward the bed.

Jaimee wasn't really aware of where she was until she felt him drop her roughly onto the soft mattress and he covered her body with his own, pinning her down with his weight and strength. Looking up into his lustful gaze, she winced when he grabbed both of her hands and pinned them up above her head with one of his own before pressing his hips against hers, allowing her to feel his heated arousal pressing against her leg.

At this, she whimpered and arched up pleadingly against him – her body terrified and yet desperately craving for what she knew was going to happen next.

“Please...Draco...”

**\*RATED SCENE DELETED\***

They stayed in that position for a long moment as Draco fought to catch his breath, his breathing erratic and his skin damp with sweat. Afraid that his weight was crushing her, he shifted their position so that she rested on top of him, their bodies still intimately joined together.

As they both breathed evenly in silence, Jaimee felt her own body's exhaustion beginning to take its weight on her and her eyes began to feel heavy, a yawn escaping her lips. From under her, Draco heard this and chuckled softly before reaching up and stroking her hair.

He placed a brief affectionate kiss on the top of her head before pulling a soft, silk green blanket over both their cooling bodies, using the same gesture to run his hands up and down the smooth skin of her back.

The last thing she saw before her eyes had closed was Draco reaching over to turn off the light and plunging them into a comforting

darkness before she finally allowed herself to fall into a deep, dreamless sleep, snuggling herself under the blankets against his bare chest.

Draco smiled to himself as he watched her sleeping peacefully in his arms. Pulling the blanket tighter around her slender figure, he shifted so that her head was nestled comfortably against his chest before wrapping a single hand around her waist, his other one stroking her hair.

He leaned down and gave the scar on her forehead another loving kiss before he finally spoke, his voice coming in a soft, inaudible whisper.

"I love you too...Harry..."

With that, he wrapped his arms tighter around her and began falling into a peaceful slumber.

It's...morning.

Those were Harry's first thoughts as she woke up the following morning to find herself naked and nestled between a luscious bundle of silk green sheets, a pair of strong muscular arms draped possessively around her waist from behind.

Her eyes widening in realization, she looked around her, the sun shining brightly and illuminating the familiar room. Biting her lip, she glanced briefly at the alarm clock on his table and noted that she had exactly two hours before breakfast and slightly less than that before her friends began searching for her in worry.

Sighing, she finally turned to look at the sleeping Slytherin beside her, smiling softly to herself when she noted how innocent he looked in his sleep. Shifting her position slightly so that she could face him, she leaned down and placed a kiss on his cheek, causing him to murmur something undecipherable in his sleep before turning to bury his head into his pillow.

Chuckling briefly to herself at this, she eventually sighed watched with sad eyes as he edged himself closer, flinging one arm out to drape over her and pulling himself closer against her warm body. She waited until his breathing had evened out before she dared to move again, not wanting to wake him.

She gave another sigh and turned to look out through the window, watching in dazed silence as several owls flew past the sky, obviously heading towards the owlery. Then, feeling a familiar ache in her chest, she forced her eyes to look at Draco once more, recalling the events that had happened that night.

I...I'm a girl...

The thought seemed both foreign and certain to her at the same time and having her admit it to herself seemed to make the realization all the more shocking. Vividly remembering how perfect and filling he had felt inside her, she blushed and hastily shook the thoughts away in embarrassment.

I actually slept with him...As a girl. She thought again, her eyes flicking back over to the Slytherin and trailing over his bare chest and the blanket that covered the rest of his perfectly toned body. Blushing darker, her eyes eventually dropped down to inspect her own naked figure and feeling slightly self-conscious, she raised the blanket higher to cover herself.

What are you doing, Harry? She mentally screamed at herself, furious at her lack of self-restraint as she briefly tried to recall what had happened between them last night.

Draco had been...Rough would have been any other person's initial impression.

She blushed darkly to herself, shaking her head as she recalled the brutal strength with which he had entered her and taken her female virginity. In bed, he had handled her with the same dominating aggressiveness he exuded from his personality and instead of scaring her; it enticed her immensely knowing that he was true to himself in every way possible – even in the throes of passion.



As a boy, she had never been able to handle women in bed with the same roughness that he had handled her last night. With her, all her past experiences with women had always been sweet and slow. She had always been more of a gentle lover – touching partners as though they were made of glass and handling them with extreme care and gentleness.

To have had Draco touching her that way was an entirely new experience altogether and it had brought out something within her that she never thought she had – a fiery passion. A passion for him that made her want to discover the other violent tangles they were capable of doing together.

He...He makes sex feel like a cross between a brilliant fight and a romantic tussle...It's unnerving and exciting all at once. She thought to herself, the heated blush never leaving her face.

But yet, surprisingly enough, as much as he had been callous and rough with his lovemaking, he had also been amazingly tender – handling her with a sense of desperate urgency that seemed to radiate from his intense eyes. Caught up in the moment, she had seen so much unspoken emotions in his beautiful eyes and just before she came – their bodies joined and their hands intertwined – she had seen something sparkle in his eyes.

Wonder...? Amazement...? Love—?

At the last word, she shook her head hastily and gave a derisive scoff, the smile on her face finally turning into a derisive sneer.

He didn't say he loved me back...I'm such an idiot! Why did I tell him I love him? Why, why, why?! She cursed herself angrily in her head, feeling incredibly foolish as she recalled the look in his face when she had told him.

Merlin...He must think I'm a real idiot...He probably doesn't even feel the same about me...Maybe last night was just a night of great sex to him. She thought to herself again, sighing sadly as felt him shifting in his sleep again, hugging her tighter against him.

It didn't matter now, however. She loved him and whether or not he reciprocated it the same way, she couldn't bring herself to deny the truth. She knew that more than anything.

"I love you...You silly, handsome prick..." She whispered sadly, leaning down to plant another gentle kiss on his forehead and watching as the expression on his face shifted slightly before he gave a brief murmur and snuggled deeper into the blankets.

Giving the sleeping blonde one last smile, she sighed again and just as she was attempting to disentangle herself from his arms, a soft tapping on the window drew her attention and she looked up sharply to see a handsome, black falcon perched on the windowsill, a letter clutched tightly in its beak.

"A falcon, huh...? I wonder if it's for me..." She murmured out loud, finally managing to disengage herself from Draco's adamant hands and wrapping one of the extra blankets around her naked form before she stood up, heading towards the window.

She winced when her quick movements finally seemed to trigger the unwelcome soreness between her legs and she stopped briefly to steady herself, her eyes wide with realization. So this is what it feels like. Now I know why women are so uptight about sex... She thought, still cringing as she finally made it to the window.

As soon as she had opened it, the large bird had swooped in and deposited the small envelope into her arms before immediately flying back out, never once sending her an acknowledging glance. Her eyes narrowing at that, she took the letter in her hand and began to open it.

"Stupid pompous, arrogant bird! I wouldn't be surprised if that was Draco's falcon or perhaps—" She stopped herself midsentence when she tore open the envelope and read the small slip of paper inside, unable to recognize the elegant handwriting.

Jaimee. Meet me at the Quidditch pitch.

The letter was unsigned and nothing was attached to it, adding to her suspicion as she let the note slip from her hands, allowing it to fall down to the cold, marble floor.

I wonder who sent this... She thought darkly to herself, her eyes narrowing in brief debate with herself as to whether or not she should do what it instructed. Then, nodding to herself in affirmation, she stole another cautious look at Draco to make sure he was still asleep. When she was certain he was, she began looking around the room for her clothes, tiptoeing carefully through the mess of strewn clothing along the floor lest she slip and woke the Slytherin up.

Clasping the blankets tighter around her and still cringing in pain as she bent down, she lifted her shirt off the ground and groaned when she saw the horrible tear Draco had made in it the night before.

Great...Thanks a lot, Malfoy... She thought in annoyance, now glancing around the room for her wand to repair it. When she realized that her wand was in her jacket pocket and her jacket was out in the living room, she groaned in laziness before sighing and tossing the shirt aside, gathering the rest of her clothes in her hands.

Then, striding into Draco's large closet, she smirked and pointedly began rifling through his shirts instead, rolling her eyes at all the designer brands. Hope you don't mind if I borrow a shirt, Draco...After all...You did say I could... She thought gleefully to herself, recalling his words several days ago during Transfigurations class.

Chuckling to herself, she finally pulled out another white collared, striped shirt and placed it gingerly atop the nearby dresser before she hurriedly began slipping her clothes and underwear back on, cursing when she was met with her morning trial of clasping her bra behind her.

Once she managed to do this – after about five minutes of cursing and muttering angrily in impatience – she finally pulled on her jeans and slipped herself into Draco's shirt, shivering delightfully when she felt the baby soft fabric caressing her skin.

Alright, so maybe expensive clothes aren't all about appearance after all. She mused, smirking to herself in amusement before she finally turned to look at herself in his full-length mirror, wincing when she caught sight of her tangled, bedroom hair. Inspecting her appearance further, she noted with a small smirk that although Draco's shirt was ridiculously large on her slender frame, it seemed to suit her perfectly – just like he said it would.

Humming to herself, she tried to smooth the tangles out of her hair with her hands but her efforts were obviously in vain and in annoyance, she shrugged and waved the concern away, stepping out of his closet and back into his bedroom to look for her shoes.

When she found them near the corner and she bent down to tie them back on, she smiled to herself when she noticed Draco's scent emanating from the shirt she was wearing. Sensing this, she glanced back over to the sleeping Slytherin and smiled sadly when she saw that he was now hugging his pillow in her place, obviously unaware that she was awake.

Finishing up with her shoelaces, she finally stood up and began to walk over to him, unsure if she should tell him she was leaving or if she should just let him sleep. Nervously deciding against the former, she leaned down and gave him one last kiss on the cheek instead – gently stroking his mane of blonde hair and watching as his lips quirked briefly into a contented smile.

"I'll...See you, Draco."

With that, she bit her lip and finally exited the room, grabbing her jacket from the couch on the living room before she strode out of his dormitory, shutting the door quietly behind her with her wand. Looking around, she turned and began making her way to the Quidditch pitch, ignoring the curious glances she was receiving from some of the students who were already roaming the corridors.

When she finally made it to the deserted open field, her eyebrows rose up in confusion and she began walking towards the very center, looking around her in confusion for any sign of the person who had sent her that note.

Okay...That was anticlimactic. Who the hell sent me here? She thought in growing annoyance, gritting her teeth as she stared off into the empty stands. She was just about to turn and head back towards the castle to grab some breakfast when a low voice finally spoke up behind her, immediately causing her to stiffen in alarm.

“Good morning, Jaimee...”

She recognized that voice instantly and she whirled around, finding herself face to face with a handsome, smirking Anton Malfoy. Seeing the dangerous glint in his eyes, she took a cautious step backwards and her hand ghosted over her wand, green eyes narrowing suspiciously at the half-veela in anger.

“What do you want, Anton? Haven’t I made it clear before that I have no more intention of seeing you this season? I think you’re disgusting and—”

“Thank you for meeting me here on such short notice. I was afraid you wouldn’t come.” He drawled on as though she hadn’t spoken, stepping toward her again just as she took another step back, causing the veela to sneer to himself at her avoidance.

“What do you want, you ugly half-breed?!” She hissed, her eyes flashing and her voice venomous as she spat the words out of her mouth. At the insult, Anton’s eyes darkened in anger and a hideous snarl formed itself on his face.

He sneered and inclined his head briefly toward her in a quick, mocking bow before he took a step backward, taking his wand out of his pocket and pointing it directly at her chest. His next hissed words, however, forced her breath to hitch painfully into her throat.

“I challenge you...To a magical combat.”

Stretching himself on his bed, Draco muffled a yawn before forcing his eyes open and peering around his room – a strange feeling of warmth and contentment welling up inside his chest. His body felt utterly exhausted and already he felt the large, painful scratches and

scrape wounds on his back but ironically, he felt completely well-rested.

He couldn't prevent a smile from breaking out into his face as he recalled the previous night, utterly enamored with the girl he had once known to be Harry Potter.

She was so beautiful...So sexy and gorgeous...And she's mine... He thought to himself again, smirking smugly as he shifted underneath his silk blankets and finally turned to face her.

His eyes immediately snapped wide open in shock, however, when all he was met with beside him was a cold, lifeless pillow.

"Harry?!"

He asked sharply, his eyes darting around the room before he bolted out of his bed, wrapping the blankets around his waist. Taking one look around the room, his eyes narrowed in frustration when he noted that her clothes were gone and walking further into the living room, he saw with angry disappointment that her jacket was no longer there either.

I can't believe she left! He thought angrily to himself, walking back into his bedroom and collapsing back onto the bed in anger, a highly irritated scowl on his face.

Was I too rough with her? What the hell is that idiot thinking?! I ought to find her and yell at her for leaving me here like an idiot! Maybe I should even take off house points! That git! He thought to himself in irrational anger, his eyes narrowing and a mocking sneer on his lips.

As he recalled, last night had been an absolute dream and he couldn't possibly think of any logical reason as to why she would leave him hanging like this.

Draco sighed and buried his face in his hands, shaking his head.

She had felt so right in his arms – two pieces of the same puzzle fitting each other perfectly. The way she had screamed when he had

taken her...The way she had moaned and whispered his name again and again...Draco shuddered at the memory, his cheeks flushing with desire.

No other woman was better suited for him in every way imaginable. He loved her and he was going to make damn sure that she married him – whether she wanted to or not. And that meant challenging her immediately to a combat and finally showing her his true strength in battle.

Stupid Potter...I'll show her not to leave a man in bed like that so early in the morning. He thought darkly again but before he could add further to his thoughts, he blinked when he caught sight of the slip of paper on the floor near the window.

Raising a curious eyebrow, he stood up and walked over to it to pick it up, his eyes immediately going wide with desperation, anger and dread all at once when he recognized the neat, elegant handwriting written on it.

“FUCK NO!”

With that, Draco's eyes clouded over in fear and panic before he hurled the sheets off himself and ran to his closet, throwing his clothes on himself as fast as was humanely possible.

“I WON'T LET IT HAPPEN!”

A/N: :gasp: Cliffhanger! I'm so sorry! That had to be done, it really did. I believe the story has reached a little past the middle at this point. Action is picking up! Teehee! In any case, I hope you all enjoyed this chapter. I figured it was about time those two got a little action before they actually squared off against each other. And to clarify, NO, Jaimee is not pregnant. :/ Not my thing, guys. Sorry. That'll all come after their marriage. :wink:

IMPORTANT NOTE: For information as to where I posted the deleted portion of this chapter, I put the URL in my profile page. Of course, judging that this is my first time to actually attempt to post an explicit scene, I desperately need your feedback so viewing it means you are

expected to send me a review alright? Even just a teeny one about what you think...Please? :pouts: It'll give me confidence to post future ones. :wink:

Anyway... I wonder what Anton's going to do. :dun-dun-dun!: Haha! To find out, you'll all have to REVIEW FIRST! :grins: Tell me what you think alright? I love hearing all your thoughts and opinions. For now, cheers!



## Chapter 24 – Making Mistakes

Ron rapped noisily on the entrance to Hermione's dormitory, his eyebrows creased in worry as to where his best friend had gone off the previous night. He had actually been the first one to arrive in their room that night, followed by Neville and eventually Dean and Seamus. Harry, however, he hadn't seen the entire night and he had begun to worry when he woke up that morning to find her bed still empty, its sheets and covers still perfectly arranged.

She probably spent the night in Hermione's room... I'm probably overreacting. He reassured himself as he tapped on the entrance again, checking his wristwatch in impatience. Breakfast was about to be served soon and he was going to strangle both girls if they kept him from a good, satisfying meal this morning.

"Hermione? Is Harry in there with you? Hurry up, both of you. I'm starving!" He complained loudly, knocking harder and his voice growing coarse as he felt irritation rising in his chest.

He heard a muffled gasp from inside and his eyebrows shot up when the sound was followed by what seemed like a hurried scuffling and murmuring of voices. At this, Ron felt his eyes grow wide with shock and his head was immediately filled with perverted images of what his two female best friends could possibly be doing inside.

Oh Merlin! Don't tell me they actually...did stuff...last night?! I thought Hermione wasn't into that thing! Ron thought, grinning in spite of himself as he leaned forward and pressed his ear against the wall entrance and strained to hear what was going on inside.

He heard several more hushed whispers and voices speaking but he could only make out some of the words.

"....Quiet...Stay there..."

"...Tell him...Knows already..."

"...Embarrassing! I...him..."

Following that, he heard another round of hurried scuffling before a set of footsteps began stumbling towards the entrance. Unfortunately, he failed to pull himself away fast enough and as soon as the dormitory entrance opened, Ron yelped and stumbled forward into the room, crashing himself into a white-wrapped figure.

“Ron! Watch it, will you?!” Hermione hissed in a rather high voice, taking a cautious step backward as Ron laughed nervously and hauled himself off the ground. His laughter faded when he came face to face with a tousled-haired Hermione wrapped clutching a clean white blanket around her otherwise naked form, a highly embarrassed blush on her face.

At the sight of her, Ron’s eyes widened and he looked at her like she had just turned into a Blast-Ended Skrewt. “Bloody hell! You did! You and Harry slept together! Merlin’s beard, I can’t believe you were into that kind of thing, Hermione!” He exclaimed loudly, causing the blush on Hermione’s face to darken and her eyes to narrow at him in warning.

“Ron! I did not sleep with Harry! What are you on about?! I—”

“I mean, I wish I could have been there to see it! W—Well, that is—not that I’m into that kind of thing, Hermione, I—OW!” He clutched his stinging cheek in pain as Hermione slapped him, causing him to glare at her in indignation.

“What was that for?!”

“YOU SICK PERVERT! I DID NOT SLEEP WITH HARRY! SHE IS A GIRL FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! OF ALL THE DISGUSTING, SEXIST, PIGHEADED THINGS TO ASSUME—” Hermione stopped her tirade when Ron’s eyes moved up over her shoulder to glance at the figure who had come up behind her and widened comically, his face going white with shock.

“Holy mother of...Hermione, don’t tell me you—”

“Good morning, Weasley.” Blaise Zabini greeted in a low drawl, smirking in amusement at the mixture of shock, disbelief and disgust

on the red-haired Gryffindor's face. Cringing further, Ron noticed that the only thing covering the Slytherin's bare form was the clean white blanket that he clutched around his waist.

Ron seemed to blank out entirely for a full three minutes, his vision swimming and his face frozen in a half-kringe, half stare. Upon seeing the expression on his face, Hermione gave a nervous laugh and tried to push Blaise back into the room, giving the smirking Slytherin a warning glare.

"Ron, are you okay? What was that you were on about Harry?" She asked, trying to break out of his thoughts. Unfortunately, Ron seemed to snap and he finally jerked backward and pointed frantically at Blaise, his finger shaking dramatically.

"BLOODY HELL! YOU SLEPT WITH ZABINI! BLOODY HELL, HERMIONE! YOU HAD SEX! WITH A SLYTHERIN! WITH ZABINI!" He blurted out loudly, causing Hermione to darken in embarrassment when his voice had called the attention of a passing student who had turned to stare at the scene they were making.

"Ron! Keep your voice down!" She hissed, narrowing her eyes but Ron jerked back again, nearly slipping on his own foot before he steadied himself and gave Blaise a horrified stare.

"I WILL NOT KEEP MY VOICE DOWN! YOU HAD SEX WITH A SLYTHERIN! I—"

"Ron, keep your voice down before I give you detention with Filch for a month!" Hermione snapped angrily, giving him a dangerous glare. Ron opened and closed his jaw for a couple of minutes before he finally managed to speak again, his voice dropping to a shaky whisper.

"You really slept with him?! I thought you said he was a jerk! And I thought you were with Boot for Merlin's sake! Have I not been able to keep up here?!" He asked frantically, his voice cracking and at this sentence, Blaise's eyes finally narrowed in irritation.

“Shut up, Weasley. Quit proving how much of an idiot you really are.” He growled, giving the ranting Gryffindor a sneer. Before Ron could utter a retort to his insult, Hermione had given an exasperated sigh and yanked Ron into her room, shutting the entrance behind them.

Once the red-head was inside, she finally spoke – turning to give Ron a small, calming smile. “Ron...Let me explain this alright? Just...calm down for a minute. Can you do that?” She asked, looking carefully at him and watching his shoulders heaving up and down in shock.

When he nodded, she finally began to speak. “I was with Terry yesterday... But see, when we got back to Hogwarts, we separated early. He...Well, he wasn’t exactly the liveliest of dates, you see.” She began, causing Blaise to give a derisive snort behind her.

“He’s boring as hell is what you should say.” He commented under his breath and at that, Hermione elbowed him sharply, causing him to glare at her in annoyance.

Ron only nodded weakly in response, waiting for her to continue. “And well...When I got back, I saw Blaise and he was heading back to his dormitory too. We talked and eventually, we ended up catching a late snack in the kitchens...And while talking...We decided to give ourselves a month of courtship procedures to see if we’re suited for one another.” She finished, causing Ron to raise an eyebrow before making a sarcastic remark.

“Yes...And that explains why you slept with him.” He finished bluntly, causing Hermione to look slightly embarrassed and Blaise to smirk widely in response.

“That wasn’t planned, Weasley. When I decided to bring her back to her room, things got a little heated...At least now we both know we’re suited for each other physically.” He drawled, moving forward to wrap his arm around her waist but Hermione nudged him away again, blushing darker.

Ron tried not to groan out loud but he gave Hermione a look, his voice dropping to a softer whisper. “Did he say it yet? Does he...?”

He asked carefully. Hermione instantly knew what he was referring to and bit her lip, looking hesitant before answering.

“Not yet...Nor did I...But that’s what we’re going to find out.” She told him and when Ron still looked unsure, Blaise finally sighed and spoke up, directing both Gryffindors’ attention to him. “Look... I’m not the bad guy you make me out to be, Weasley. Hell, I’m even nicer than Draco on most occasions.” He began, his voice light and tinged with humor. “I really do like Hermione. And my intentions for pursuing her are sincere.” He told him, causing Ron to sigh in spite of himself.

“Alright...But I swear, if you do anything to hurt her again, like that stupid stunt you pulled with your uncle, I’m going to—”

“Blaise! Are you in there?!”

Hearing the familiar female voice, Ron stopped and met Hermione’s confused gaze. His eyes narrowed and he turned around just Blaise gave a startled blink, staring blankly at the closed dormitory entrance.

“Who is it?” Hermione asked uncertainly, walking forward and pressing her ear against the entrance wall. Blaise walked up behind her, his eyebrows raised in curiosity.

“It’s Raine! I heard from one of the students that Blaise was in there! Please! I’ve got to talk to him, it’s important!” Lorraine pleaded from the other side of the wall and upon hearing this, Ron immediately stiffened in alarm, his face going pale with nervousness.

“Don’t let her in! She’s probably got nothing but trouble up her sleeve and—”

“Oh Ron, give it a rest. Grow up already, will you?” Hermione muttered irritably under her breath just before she waved her wand and opened the door, allowing them to see Lorraine standing there in immaculate robes of pink, her beautiful face creased in a frown of suspicion.

Seeing Ron there, the frown deepened for a moment before she sighed and shook her head at herself. She walked toward Blaise,

blushing slightly in awkward embarrassment when she noticed both Blaise and Hermione's current state of undress.

"I—I'm sorry, I seem to have caught you in a bad time. I'm worried...I can't find my brother anywhere. I have a horrible feeling that he's up to something... I just don't want him to do anything to anger Uncle Lucius or Grandfather." She rushed out hastily as Blaise took her outstretched hand gave it a reassuring squeeze.

"Calm down, Raine. I'm sure he just spent the night with some chit again like he always does. Did you tell Byron already? Isn't he the one who's supposed to keep a close eye on Anton?" He asked, nodding to Hermione as she began to head towards her closet to dress up.

Ron stood there awkwardly, looking back and forth between the two aristocrats in uncertainty. When Lorraine's eyes met his for a brief moment, he immediately snapped his head away, causing the female Malfoy to give an exasperated sigh of irritation.

"I sent an owl to Byron the minute I couldn't find Anton this morning. In any case, will you guys help me look for him? I don't really know my way around Hogwarts." She asked, looking imploringly at him and turning likewise to shoot Hermione a similar look when the Head Girl walked out of her closet decked out in her full Gryffindor uniform.

Rolling his eyes, Blaise gave a sigh but nodded and began gathering his clothes off the floor. "Alright, hold on. Let me get dressed. Hermione, can I use your bathroom for a minute?" He asked and Hermione nodded, giving Lorraine a brief smile.

"Sure, hold on. Let me show you where it is." She said, escorting him further into the dormitory and unwittingly leaving Ron and Lorraine standing there and staring uncertainly at each other.

They looked at each other in silence for a moment before Lorraine bit her lip and turned away, her cheeks flushing in embarrassment. When the awkwardness became almost unbearable and the two of them were resorting to staring at just about anything to avoid looking

at each other – including the evidences of a rather romantic tussle around the room – Ron finally spoke.

“So...How are things with your fiancé? Is he spoiling you rotten with a lot of gifts yet? I read from the tabloids he just bought you a diamond engagement ring.” He mocked in a sarcastic voice, giving her a fake smile and at that, Lorraine’s eyes narrowed icily and she returned his harsh comment with a cold sneer.

“Maybe he is, what’s it to you, Weasley? And don’t believe everything you read in the papers...Okay? It wasn’t a diamond ring. It was a necklace. And it was hideous.” She snapped back, shaking her head at him before turning away to glare at the curtains hanging by the window.

Ron only gaped at her reply before he recovered himself and gave a derisive scoff. “Don’t get the wrong idea, Malfoy. It’s not like I was keeping tabs on you or anything. I just happened to—”

“Oh don’t even try it. I know you’ve been waiting for any opportunity to prove to yourself that I’m the materialistic idiot you make me out to be. I am not, okay? If anything, the one who is materialistic here is you. You’re the one who is always so focused on money, not me.” She drawled pointedly, causing Ron’s cheeks to flush in indignation.

“I am not! You’ve got a lot of nerve saying that! You were the one who didn’t even tell me about your perfect fiancé—”

Lorraine’s eyes flashed and she gave a sardonic laugh, shaking her head at his words. “Philippe Winchester is hardly someone I would call perfect...Okay? You want to know the truth? He’s nothing but a shallow, self-obsessed idiot who cares about nothing but his money and his reputation. Do you think I enjoy being engaged to someone like that?” She retorted darkly, finally causing Ron’s eyes to dim in slight guilt when he finally saw the unshed tears in her eyes.

“I—I’m sorry. I didn’t know, I wasn’t aware, I—”

“Alright! Let’s go. I know a good deal of places where he might be.” A voice finally interrupted and both teenagers turned around to see

Blaise and Hermione walking back into the room, both of them fully dressed and looking anxious.

Seeing the blush on Lorraine's face and the slightly guilty expression on Ron's, Hermione's eyebrow rose up in amusement. Unfortunately, Blaise seemed not to have noticed anything. He grabbed his jacket from where it hung on the wall and shrugged it on, giving Lorraine an expectant look.

When Hermione saw the tears in her eyes, her eyebrows rose up in concern. "Are you okay? You look a bit teary-eyed." She observed but Lorraine shook her head hastily and forced out a laugh, giving the Head Girl a reassuring smile.

"I—I'm fine. Let's go before Anton does something stupid." She managed to say, nodding briefly before she rushed out of the room, much to both Blaise and Hermione's confusion.

Turning to look at Ron's guilty expression, Hermione opened her mouth to ask him what happened but he gave her a warning look before rushing out of the room as well, leaving Hermione to stare at Blaise in confusion.

"Am I missing something here?" She asked, her eyebrows fusing together but Blaise just gave her a suggestive grin before seizing her seizing her by the waist, leaning down and giving her a brief kiss on the lips.

"The only thing you're missing is me. This little rendezvous is hardly over, Granger. We'll resume this after we find that veela jerk." He whispered into her ear, causing Hermione to smile in spite of herself at his cheesiness as he pulled away and gave her a saucy wink.

"I'm looking forward to it..."

Jaimee stared at Anton in shock, their eyes locked on in an unwavering gaze as they waited for the other to look away. When she saw the deadly glint in his, she finally broke away first – blinking and steadying her wand up to point at his chest.



Something definitely didn't feel right. Already, she could feel the strong, enhanced magic emanating from his aura and though she sensed that it had something to do with his veela blood, she wasn't fully aware of what a half-veela in hostile form was capable of doing. She took a deep breath before assuming battle stance, giving him a glare that betrayed the nervous pounding of her heart.

"Very well... We'll do this your way, Anton." She answered calmly, watching as a slow, ominous sneer slowly formed on his face before he matched her stance, stepping several feet away from her.

When they both turned to see the number of Hogwarts students who had rushed out of the castle to watch them, he gave her a calm smile. "You don't mind if I'm the kind of guy who prefers my privacy, right?" He asked nonchalantly, chuckling when he saw her eyes narrow in slight confusion.

"I'm sure you are..." She mocked, raising a single eyebrow as she recalled the dozens of ugly rumors she had heard from the half-veela's promiscuous reputation. Anton grinned wider at her tone of voice just before he turned to the approaching students and raised his wand.

Then, with a single flick, he cast a large, red barrier around their area, shaping it into a wide dome. Jaimee's eyes widened at this and she took a step backward to touch the barrier in inspection, cringing when the barrier seemed to be as solid as a rock.

Seeing her panic, Anton smiled again before taking another step toward her. "I'm sure you're aware that only I can remove that barrier. Don't look so shocked...Wasn't it you who specifically stated that the right to win you over was to be decided in a one-on-one fight?" He commented casually, the smile on his face growing.

Jaimee snapped her attention back at him and reassumed her defensive stance, her fingers tightening around her wand. "Look, you ugly two-faced bastard! Take another step toward me and I swear I will—"

“You’ll...what?” He hissed harshly, causing her to gasp and give a startled cry as his face suddenly blazed into its vicious hostile form — his elegant features morphing into the hideous, cruel-beaked bird face she had seen for a fleeting glimpse during the debutante ball.

Seeing the horror on her face, his eyes narrowed before he surged one clawed hand forward and wrapped it dangerously around her neck, scratching painfully at her skin. She winced and struggled wildly against him, her eyes growing wide when she found her physical efforts useless against his strength.

He wrapped another clawed hand against her waist and yanked her against him, pulling her against his body and pointing his wand directly at the scar on her forehead. Desperate to look away from him, she looked over his shoulder, catching a glimpse of the horror of the watching students gathered outside the barrier. Irritated at this, Anton pressed a single sharp finger to her cheek and used it to turn her to face him.

She cringed upon seeing his face up close again and shut her eyes, refocusing all her energy into struggling against him and freeing herself enough to move her wand for a spell. His strength, however, was beyond human now and her efforts proved useless, much to the half-veela’s amusement.

“Let me go!” She screamed, doubling her efforts but his veela face merely smiled, causing her to stiffen when she caught sight of the razor-sharp teeth in his mouth.

“Certainly...In fact, we can forego this silly little fight altogether if you want. I really don’t want to hurt my future wife, after all...All you have to do is agree to marry me.” He drawled, using another sharp finger to trace the outline of her face. She shook her head furiously and spat at him, giving him a disgusted look that seemed to send his anger blazing.

In a flash, he yanked her roughly by the front of her shirt so that their faces were merely inches apart, their lips nearly touching. She tensed in disgust and desperately tried to pull away from him but he leaned down to whisper something in her ear.

"I know you spent the night with my cousin, Jaimee...You little slut...This is even his shirt, I'm sure of it. Did you enjoy yourself? Is he any good?" He mocked, his eyes narrowed scathingly. She refused to answer him, her cheeks flushing in embarrassment.

He seemed to find her reaction amusing and he laughed, his voice sounding harsh and bitter. "It doesn't matter if he had you first...Regardless...I will beat you here in front of everyone...And I will have you as my wife in the end." He spoke in a low whisper, causing Jaimee's face to pale in shock.

"Why, Anton? Why are you so intent on this? You don't even know who I am! This isn't even about me, it's about upstaging Draco, isn't it?! Why?!" She demanded, still struggling against him but he gave a derisive scoff, shaking his head at her question.

"Because he's so goddamn perfect..." He muttered angrily, a dark shadow ghosting over his eyes. "Draco this...Draco that... 'Why can't you be more like Draco, Anton?' It's always about him! Him and his perfect life! Damn him!" He whispered further, causing Jaimee to blink at the hollowness she heard in his voice.

"B—But—"

"When I marry you, Jaimee...I know my family will finally look in my direction! For once, I'll succeed at something Draco couldn't...That's all I want." He drawled further in a cold, guarded voice, speaking as though he hadn't heard a word she had said.

After a long tense silence, she finally snapped herself out of her shock and shoved him away from her, breaking through the grip he had on her arms and waist.

"I'm sorry, Anton...But whatever your reasons...I can't marry you. You'll have to fight me." She told him calmly, taking several steps back from him and watching the fury blazing to life in his eyes. Then – as though fading like a cloud of smoke – the bird-like features slowly resettled back into his stunningly handsome, human face.

Jaimee blinked at the sudden change, watching as Anton gave her an eerily calm, charming smile – flashing her rows of his perfect white teeth.

“Very well, then...”

Just as she opened her mouth to protest, he immediately took a step away from her and raised his wand, pointing it directly at her.

“Fides Argentum!”

A bundle of silver wires erupted from his wand and headed straight for her, its sharp ends gleaming dangerously as they surged through the air like a horde of snakes. Biting back a scream of panic, she turned to run but instantly cringed as she felt another sharp pain between her legs, causing her to end up stumbling to the grass.

No! Damn it! Get up! She mentally screamed at herself, forcing herself off the ground but before she managed to stand up, she felt the thin wires wrapping rapidly around her arms and legs, binding her limbs together and forcing her to fall back to the ground.

NO! She struggled to disentangle herself but the wires only squeezed tighter around her skin, another set of wires circling around her waist and continually wrapping around her body until her entire form was covered, leaving only her head exposed to air.

As the wires wrapped themselves tightly around her neck, stopping only just below her chin, her eyes turned desperately to the barrier and she felt her heart jump into her throat when she was met with familiar, silver eyes.

Draco... She thought, gasping for air as Anton jerked his wand upwards, forcing her off the ground until her body was suspended in midair, her feet dangling a few inches above the grass.

When she looked back at the blonde Slytherin, he looked as though he was shouting something furiously through the other side of the barrier but she couldn't make it out and before she could, Anton's voice had broken her thoughts.

“What is it about Draco anyway? Why does everyone like him so much?! He’s been nothing but a complete bastard to me for seventeen years...And still everyone praises him?! Why is it I’m the one who’s always wrong?!” He raged at her, his eyes dark with resentment as he watched the wires tightening around her, cutting harshly into her skin.

Jaimee gasped, cringing in pain as she felt her eyes beginning to water both from the lack of oxygen and from the wounds that were beginning to form all over her body. “P—Please! Let me go! T—This isn’t fair!” She managed to croak out, giving up struggling altogether and shutting her eyes in dismay when she felt her wand drop from her hand, falling just above her knee where the wires caught it and kept it in place.

Her green eyes flicked over to Draco again and she was surprised to see Ron, Hermione, Lorraine, Byron and Blaise behind him – all of the other teenagers screaming as Draco repeatedly hurled himself against the barrier in panic, his face pale with fear and worry.

Following her gaze, Anton seemed to smirk at his cousin’s actions for a long moment before he finally turned to her with an ominous grin on his face. “Fair? Do you think it’s fair that I have to stand back and watch him trample all over me? That my own family turns a blind eye to all he’s done to me?! I don’t think so, Jaimee...Nothing is fair, you see...” He told her, smirking wider as he raised his wand, tightening the wires yet again.

She cried out loudly, her vision now completely blurred from tears of pain as she felt several more wounds forming all over her body, drops of blood oozing out of them and seeping into her clothes.

“S—Stop...” She managed to say, crying out again when she felt another bundle of wires wrapping around her waist, cutting off more of her air supply.

“I don’t like hurting you, Jaimee...I want to end this as much as you do. You know what you have to do.” He answered simply, flicking his

wand and briefly ceasing the wires from tightening any further as he waited for her response.

Surprisingly enough, it came quickly but it wasn't the answer he was expecting.

“GO TO HELL, YOU MONSTER!”

Anton's eyes narrowed into tiny slits and his lips curled into another snarl. “Wrong answer, Miss Potter.” He hissed and with that, he raised his wand into the air again and the next spell he uttered caused Harry to immediately regret her hasty response.

“Levitas!”

The tightening of the wires had stopped but as soon as she saw the bolts of electricity that began flowing from Anton's wand through the wires towards her, she felt all the blood rush out of her face. It was only a split second before she finally screamed in pain as she felt the electricity surging throughout her entire body, causing her to convulse violently.

Please don't let me be too late. Draco thought in dread as he ran through the mess of corridors for the Quidditch field, Crabbe and Goyle closely at his heels.

“Crabbe! Goyle! Get those bloody idiots out of my way!”

His eyes narrowed and a sneer formed its way onto his face as he ran towards the crowd of growing onlookers gathered around the Quidditch pitch entrance. Hearing his angry order, both Slytherins immediately ran faster and began shoving a way for him through the crowd, causing some of the other students to complain loudly at the disruption.

“Shove off! Get out of here before I put all of you in detention!” Draco snarled louder, shoving through some fifth years and a couple more seventh years who were blocking the path to the field, all of which were whispering amongst themselves.

“I think she’s in for this one...I hear he’s a half-veela.”

“Nah...I don’t think so. Potter’s pretty strong herself so I think she can still hold out. I only hope she gets her pretty little face bruised though.”

At this, Draco growled and promptly shoved the two gossiping students forward, causing both girls to gasp and collapse onto the ground in a tangle of limbs. Seeing the blue on their uniforms, he sneered and gestured to Crabbe and Goyle once more before turning back to give the two girls a glare.

“Twenty five points from Ravenclaw for improper conduct. Get out of my sight!” He snarled, causing both to cringe as they picked themselves off the floor and tore off towards the opposite direction. Once they were gone, he felt panic sting his chest again and he tapped his foot impatiently, watching as Crabbe and Goyle began shoving and picking people up from the entrance, clearing a path for him to walk through.

Once they had cleared one wide enough for him, Draco pushed forward and ran as fast as he could towards the field, his heart pounding rapidly in his chest and his eyes furiously straining to look for any signs of Jaimee or Anton.

He saw another large crowd gathered around the middle of the grass and he felt bile rising up in his throat. Straining his legs to run faster – faster than he ever had in his life – he failed to see the other figure who was running up to him and grabbed at his arms, freezing him in his tracks.

“DRACO, WAIT!”

“Let me go, you son of a—” Draco stopped when he found himself facing Byron’s worried gaze, the other Malfoy’s strong grip keeping the Slytherin from breaking away.

“WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE?! LET ME GO, DAMN YOU!” When Draco simply refused to stop wrestling with his hold, Byron sighed and let him go, leveling him with a calm glare.

“Draco, you have to calm down. What do you intend to do, just go rushing in there? Anton’s already put up a strong barrier around the center of the field to prevent anyone from interfering in the fight.” Byron explained rationally, his golden brown eyes filled with anxiety.

Draco growled at him, shoving his cousin away in frustration. “SO WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO, BYRON?! JUST STAND HERE AND WATCH THAT GOOD-FOR-NOTHING VEELA TAKE MY GIRL AWAY FROM ME?!” He growled menacingly, the threat clearly heard in his voice but Byron shook his head and gave him a pointed look.

“No...I expect you to trust Jaimee to defeat Anton’s pompous, haughty arse. Like she will most likely do. What we can do now...Is make sure our beloved cousin doesn’t have any of his little veela tricks up his sleeve.” Byron told him, raising a single eyebrow and though against his will, Draco had to agree with the logical decision.

Narrowing his eyes, he was about to give a curt nod in agreement when another shout caught their attention and both Malfoys turned around just in time to see Lorraine, Blaise, Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley dashing towards them, all four teenagers pale with worry.

“Byron! Draco! Anton is—”

“Don’t even say it, Lorraine!” Draco growled again, interrupting her before she finished her sentence. Without so much an acknowledgment, Draco shoved past them and ran off towards the center of the field again, ignoring Blaise’s shouts after him.

He faintly heard both Ron and Hermione rushing after him in obvious fear for their best friend but his attention was immediately diverted when he finally came upon the crowd in the middle of the field. Cursing under his breath, he gave a single flick of his wand and shoved more students aside, clearing a way for himself until he got to the very center.

His heart jumped painfully in his chest when he finally caught sight of what Byron had been talking about. A translucent barrier had been



placed around a small area in the center of the field, similar to a transparent red igloo that prevented anyone from breaking through except for a circular hole at the very top to provide air.

There, in the very center of the dome, he saw them and the very sight of Jaimee's condition sent a painful stab of fear in his chest.

From the tip of Anton's wand, several wires had erupted and were now very tightly wrapped around Jaimee's wrists and legs, binding her limbs together and keeping her from struggling. Thicker wires had wrapped around her slim waist and extended further up her torso until only her head remained visible, the rest of her form enveloped in the tight, silvery mass.

She seemed to be yelling something at Anton in anger but Draco couldn't hear it well because of the barrier and he felt an excruciating feeling of helpless filling his chest. He stepped forward and began to shoot random spells at the barrier, shouting just about every curse he knew in an act of desperation.

Harry, don't lose. Please don't lose. I can't lose you now. Please. He thought desperately to himself, ignoring Byron's shouts behind him as he continued to hurl as many spells at the barrier as he could possibly think of. When none of them seemed to work, he lost his hold on himself and surged forward, punching and kicking violently at the magical barrier until his limbs began to numb in pain.

"Malfoy, stop it! Calm down, you're not helping! Harry can do this by herself! She's not some damsel in distress!" Hermione shouted furiously at him, narrowing her eyes at his behavior but again, her words seemed to fly right over the Slytherin's head.

Anton seemed to have noticed Draco's presence there and the other Malfoy turned to look at him, meeting the threatening anger in the Draco's eyes. Both cousins glared at each other for a long moment, hatred filling Draco's eyes and harsh bitterness filling Anton's.

Sneering, Anton turned back to Jaimee and finally raised his wand higher, yanking on the wires wrapped around her body and causing her to wince in pain. Draco felt his breath hitch into his throat when he

recognized the mouthed words of the spell that issued from Anton's lips.

No! Draco felt all the blood rush out of his face as he watched the bolts of light flowing through the wires from Anton's outstretched wand, moving toward Jaimee's body. Her fearful eyes looked up and met his gaze for a split second before they shut and she began convulsing violently, electricity surging through her entire body.

"He's electrocuting her! Hermione, we've got to do something! She's going to get seriously hurt!" Ron raged out loud, his blue eyes filled with anger and worry.

Hermione bit her lip, feeling her heart pounding nervously in her chest. "We can't, Ron! It was written on contract... It's a fair one-on-one challenge. We just have to hope Harry beats the crap out of this jerk." She said shakily, watching as Jaimee began struggling more violently against her holds.

At this point, Draco barely had any control over his surging emotions but as soon as Jaimee began screaming, he snapped again and raced forward, punching, kicking and hurling himself against the barrier again and again until he felt the bruising and cuts beginning to form on his own body.

"HARRY!!!!!!!"

Pain...So much pain...

That was the only thing that seemed to register in Harry's mind as she felt the electricity surging throughout her form. Her senses had become completely numb and her vision had begun to darken yet it hurt so much that she was beginning to lose sight of everything else around her anyway. All she could think about was how much she wanted to lose consciousness right then and there.

She was vaguely aware that Draco seemed to have strengthened his efforts to break through the barrier and was now ramming his entire

body against it again and again but even this barely registered in her mind.

Hurts...Hurts too much...Help...Please help... She shut her eyes, another scream escaping her lips and echoing around the closed space.

She would have passed out but strangely enough, after a minute the electrocution had stopped and she opened her eyes to see Anton shaking his head at himself before collapsing to the grass on his knees. The blonde half-veela then buried his face in his hands, his shoulders slumping forward in defeat.

“N—No...I can’t do this...” He whispered, taking a deep breath before he looked up at her and managed a weak smile. “I—I don’t want to hurt you...I’m sorry, Jaimee...” He whispered, causing Jaimee’s eyes to widen in disbelief as the wires around her began to loosen slowly, allowing her use of her hands.

Anton looked as though he was going to say something else but before he could, her fingers had closed around her wand and she immediately tore it away from the wires, shouting the first spell that came to mind.

“Praemus!”

He shielded himself with his arms as the remaining wires wrapped around her exploded violently, pelting him with shards of metal and successfully freeing the Gryffindor, allowing her to run several meters away from him. She knelt down on one knee, keeping her wand pointed at him as she tried to regain proper use of her limbs which, at the moment, were still bleeding profusely.

“You cheating bastard! I’m going to destroy you!” She screamed at him, ignoring the crowd of onlookers gathered around them as she began hurling every single hex she could think of at his cowering body, forcing the half-veela to raise his wand and protect himself with a shielding spell.

“No, wait! Stop, I—”

“YOU DIDN’T WANT TO STOP! WHY SHOULD I?!” She shouted at him, directing her wand up at the sky and immediately causing a shower of fireballs to rain down on his defending form.

“I did stop! I—”

“SHUT UP!” She screamed again and this time, she jerked her wand backwards, causing it to expand and transfigure itself into a long, sharp sword. Ignoring his wide eyes, she raised it up into the air and dashed right for him, forcing him to back away.

She lunged forward, attempting to slash at him but he raised his wand up to meet her sword, easily transfiguring it into a similar sword to meet hers. Undaunted, she pulled back and lunged at him again – this time at his waist but this was when Anton evaded her onslaught and turned sharply, running away from her towards the opposite direction.

Growling under her breath, she transfigured the sword back into a wand and aimed it at his feet, watching as a single rope erupted from its tip and wrapped itself around his ankles. Yanking the rope backwards, she sneered as he tripped and fell back to the grass, cursing loudly in pain.

Struggling to free his ankles from her reins, he looked up and watched her approaching him with wide eyes – wincing when he saw the spiteful expression on her face. His eyes seemed to flick to his dropped wand near his left leg but Harry had seen it and she raised her wand again, summoning his into her free hand.

When Anton cringed and looked as though he was going to say something, she shook her head and spoke before him, giving him a disgusted glare. “You know, I used to like you... I thought you were really charming and I admired the way you treated your sister. I would never have known you turned out to be the jerk you are...” She commented, her voice sounding strangely disappointed.

She was just about to say something else but Anton had refocused his attention to his ankles, untangling himself from the ropes that

bound them together. To her surprise, he managed to work himself free and he sprang up on his feet, flinging the ropes back at her.

She made to run after him but she stumbled slightly when he easily reverted into his hostile form, a pair of gigantic, feathered wings expanding from just below his shoulders. Then, without so much as a backward glance, he leaped up into the air and flew off, flying right through the small hole at the very top of the magical barrier and eventually disappearing off into the sky.

“You can’t run from me you veela scum! You started this! I’m going to finish it!” She shouted after him and she pointed her wand at herself, wordlessly initiating the spell that came to mind. The wand in her hand dropped listlessly to the ground as she felt her entire body enveloped in a blinding white light, causing the watching students around them to shield their eyes.

Once the light had subsided, they barely caught a glimpse of the magnificent phoenix that now perched where Jaimee had been standing before it snatched the two wands on the ground in its beak and flew up towards the sky in pursuit of Anton, its beautiful wings flapping gracefully in the air.

Where is he...? She thought to herself as she flew through the clouds in search of him, her sharp eyes scanning the area closely for any signs of the blonde. Once she caught sight of him – flying several meters away towards the very same high tower she had once rescued Sirius from – she sped up and tore through the air after him, her wings slicing through the air like a knife.

Anton seemed not to have noticed her presence as he landed, collapsing onto the floor of the spacious tower. His wings faded and he reassumed human form, his features looking completely exhausted when he forced himself off the ground. As soon as Jaimee landed after him, the glow of the light that illuminated her as she transformed back caught his attention and he whirled around, his muscles stiff with alarm.

He began to back away from her, looking vulnerable without his wand but she merely scoffed and held it up in her hand, tossing it to him

with a pointed sneer. “Unlike you, Malfoy...I don’t run away from my battles...And I fight fair. Shall we finish this...?” She asked softly, taking several steps away from him as he caught his wand in his hand.

For a long moment, he stared at her, his eyes narrowed in contemplation as they flicked back and forth between her and the exit. Then, sighing with a firm, resolute nod, he took a single step toward her and raised his wand, pointing it to meet hers.

They held each other’s gaze again – their muscles tense and ready to jolt into action. Anton struck first, his face flashing once into hostile form as he spun around and sliced his wand through the air, sending a powerfully enhanced gust of wind at her.

She raised her wand and shielded herself with a spell, gasping when the sheer power of his magic sent her flying backwards until she crashed onto the opposite wall, bruising the skin of her back.

His veela blood is enhancing his magic beyond proportions! She realized, shielding herself again with a more powerful spell as he reassumed hostile form and flew right at her, his wand flicking out into a sharp sword and clashing loudly against the protective force around her.

The harsh impact of his sword sent a jagged crack through her protective barrier before it completely disintegrated, leaving her gaping at him with wide, disbelieving eyes. Before he could attack her again, she shoved him away from her and transfigured her wand into an iron shield instead, raising it up just in time to block his strike.

His sword clanged loudly against the shield and she winced at the sound, pushed backwards by his efforts. Once she was cornered, Anton ceased his attacks and took a step back to revert to human form, keeping his sword pointed at her in case she tried to attack again.

“Look, I would like to talk. Jaimee, if I could only apologize for my actions—”

“It’s a little too late for apologies, you jerk! I know how you took advantage of me when I wasn’t wearing my veela protection charm. You sick—” She cut herself off and lunged forward, her shield transforming back into a wand. She raised it and enveloped him in cyclone, sending him crashing towards the opposite wall of the tower.

Anton winced in pain when his back collided violently against the wall and he sank to his knees, clutching at the wound that had formed on his left arm. He looked up, his eyes widening when he saw the long magical whip that had protruded out of her wand and was now aiming for his face.

In a spur of quick thinking, he transformed back into hostile form to shield his face with his wings before he flew upwards and sped toward her, landing a powerful kick to her midsection. Jaimee cried out as she collapsed onto the ground, gasping for air and reaching out for her dropped wand.

Crawling backwards, she managed to retrieve it and raised it up just in time to shield herself from another onslaught of attacks as Anton raised his wand up to his lips and blew, sending dangerously large wisps of fire heading straight for her face.

Her shielding spell barely had the strength to withstand it and within a couple of seconds, the barrier had melted away – leaving her completely vulnerable to his attack. When he smirked in triumph and raised his wand up to his lips again, Jaimee blinked and looked up at the small, protruding piece of wood near one of the dungeon cells behind her.

Just as he blew another round of flames at her, she raised her wand and another whip lashed out from its tip, latching itself onto the wood for support and allowing her to swing herself over him, barely evading the flames of his spell.

Unfortunately, her attention on avoiding his flames distracted her from the actual direction she was headed and she crashed clumsily against a wall, hitting her head on solid bricks. Rubbing her sore forehead and cursing at the stupidity of the situation, she picked

herself up off the ground and whirled around, her eyes narrowing when she felt Anton's wand now pressing sharply against her throat.

"You should really watch where you're going, Jaimee..." He drawled carefully, his lips twitching in silent laughter as he caught the embarrassment on her face. She thought carefully, her eyes flicking around and spotting her wand lying inches away from her feet.

Deciding against it, she grabbed his wand instead and yanked it out of his grasp, using the same momentum from the maneuver to force herself into a back flip, purposely using her feet to land a powerful kick up against his chest until he stumbled back a few steps away from her.

Growling and rubbing his chest in pain, he bent down, grabbed her wand from the ground and pointed it at her, unleashing a powerful wave of fire that seemed to sweep the entire area.

Jaimee gasped and ran to the corner of the tower, crouching down and shielding herself with another protective spell but it seemed it wasn't enough for his powerful magic and it collapsed after his first wave, leaving her too exhausted to put up another one.

Damn it! I've done nothing but shield myself throughout this entire fight! There has to be a way to lower his magical enhancements... I don't remember if I read anything about it! She thought to herself in panic, managing a weak magical shield around herself as Anton sent another wave of fire around the area – this time using his wings to propel the fire faster toward her.

She cried out loud in pain as the barrier she cast instantly broke and she felt the harsh stinging of the flames against the skin of her arms, leaving her pale skin with angry, red burns. Her eyes tearing with pain, she looked up and found herself staring into his hideous beaked-face, watching the flurry of unreadable emotions in his icy blue eyes.

His hostile form...I have to get him out of hostile form...It's the only way to fight fairly against him...How the hell— She grunted to herself in irritation as she finally gave up on defense altogether and settled for evasion, hurling herself out of her position and transforming



herself back into a phoenix. She leaped into the air and flew as fast as she could away from him as he sent another wave of fire toward her.

Where's Hermione when you need her? She kidded herself helplessly, swooping downward just in time to avoid having the feathers of her wings burned right off. Exhausted and out of breath, she flew towards the dungeon Sirius had been locked in and perched up on the high back window away from his line of sight.

Anton stopped after that and flew up into the air as well, flying around the area in search of her and she took that short reprieve to think of her next plan of action, knowing that her magic and efforts would only be half as effective on him in his current form.

A weakness...That's it! Every veela in hostile form has a weakness! Each one likes to attack in elemental spells and is usually weak to a single element! Any other spell would prove useless and agitate them more! She suddenly realized, recalling a particular lesson about dueling with magical creatures in one of her Auror training sessions.

"There you are, my pretty little phoenix..." A voice suddenly broke out of her thoughts, causing her to give a squeak of surprise as she found herself blown off her hiding place by another strong gust of fire. She cringed when she felt the flames burning off some of her feathers, causing her to lose flight and come crashing to the ground until she hit her head hard on a stray rock.

She felt a sharp pain at the collision and the trickle of blood near her forehead that came after. Cringing in pain, she felt her body automatically transfigure back into a human and she struggled to pick herself off the ground, her body weak from all her evident injuries.

Seeing the blood on her head, Anton finally stopped and landed a couple of feet away from her, his eyes wide with regret and dismay. "Oh god, I'm so sorry! I didn't mean to—"

"GET AWAY FROM HER!"

Blinking hazily into the direction the voice had come from, her eyes squinted blearily at the sight of Draco blasting through the door leading up to the tower, a group of familiar faces – Byron, Lorraine, Ron, Blaise and Hermione – close at his heels.

At the sight of her weak and bloodied form, Draco's eyes narrowed dangerously and Hermione's began to tear in worry. The Head Girl almost rushed out toward her had Blaise not grabbed her arms from behind, keeping her in place.

"You cheating bastard...I'm going to kill you." Ron growled loudly, taking a step forward as well but Byron kept him back, shaking his head furiously.

"S—Stay back, Ron...I've got this." Harry forced out, crouching weakly to retrieve Anton's wand from the ground. She barely managed to straighten herself back up into a standing position and at the sight of her frail body covered in so many cuts and bruises, Draco felt an unexplainable fury exploding in his chest.

He growled and made to run forward, his wand clutched tightly in his hand and itching to land an unforgivable curse on his cousin but again, he felt not only Byron's but Lorraine's hands on him, keeping him in place.

"Draco, wait! The fight isn't over! We can't interfere—"

"LET ME GO! I DON'T CARE IF YOU WANT TO PROTECT YOUR BROTHER, RAINE! I'M GOING TO KILL THAT GODDAMN HALF-BREED! I SHOULD HAVE DONE THIS A LONG TIME AGO!" He exploded at her, shoving the female Malfoy away from him in rage.

Lorraine gasped as she was thrown backwards against Ron, who caught her gently and kept her from running up to Draco again. The Head Boy was now fighting violently with Byron, struggling to break himself free from the other boy's grasp.

Hearing Draco's words, Anton finally turned to him and gave him a weak sneer that surprisingly enough, lacked the usual venom it

contained. Instead, it was fused with a kind of self-pity that Jaimee had never seen before.

“Killed me a long time ago? What do you mean, dear cousin? Wasn’t it enough that you and your little friends bullied me throughout most of my childhood...? Would you rather have killed me instead?” He whispered harshly, his eyes darkening at the memory.

Draco blinked rapidly in shock before he stopped and stood up straighter; looking directly at his cousin’s narrowed eyes. “I don’t know what you’re talking about, Anton...If anything, the one who has the right to get angry here is me. Not you. For three years, you stole every single girl I introduced to the family...And you did it purposely to humiliate me.” He spat out snidely, finally causing Jaimee’s eyes to widen in realization.

Anton laughed harshly but the anger in his voice was gone and instead, it shook with barely restrained emotions. “And yet, despite all the humiliation, the family would always support you in the end wouldn’t they? They never even knew of the horrible things you did and said to me. You were the perfect Malfoy son... Everyone else was just living in your shadow.” He spoke bitterly, his face twisting into a hideous snarl.

Draco merely sneered at him, taunting his anger even more when he laughed. “So what? You admit it then that you were nothing but a petty loser who was jealous of—”

“Ten years, Draco...Ten years of my childhood I spent with the memory of you and your friends – Crabbe and Goyle? You did nothing but bully me and humiliate me behind everyone’s back.” Anton finally snapped at him, causing Draco to sneer wider and Jaimee to pale in shock.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about—”

“Don’t you?! Do you remember hanging me upside down up in the chandelier in the Malfoy dining room the night before Grandfather threw a breakfast for some of his friends? Do you remember how angry he was when he found me?! How long I had to endure his

punishments? Do you?" He growled, oblivious to the other people watching now as his eyes focused intently on his cousin.

Draco reddened at the anger he suddenly found himself receiving from Harry's demanding glare and he shook his head, fiercely denying the accusation.

"Stop lying to yourself! I gave them no such order—they did that themselves—"

"You never stopped them! You and your friends – Philippe, Oswald and all those other bastards – would gang up on me the entire day and taunt me about my veela blood! HALF-BREED! HALF-BREED! YOU UGLY MONSTER! PANSY-GIRLY-BOY!" Anton laughed again, his eyes now filled with a fury that Draco had never seen before.

The Malfoy heir continued to sneer at him in hatred, unsure of how to react to his cousin's words. "It was meant to be a joke, Anton. You were always this wimpy, shy little loser back then that I couldn't help it. If you couldn't handle that—"

Anton burst out laughing, his eyes blurring slightly as he finally made to walk toward the other Malfoy, the look on his face hard and callous. "A joke?! Do you have any idea of the self-disgust and broken self-image I have had to live with my entire life because of you?! Monster?! Ugly?! Do you have any idea how much you destroyed my self-esteem?!" He shouted furiously, his mouth twisting into a growl that showed off the vicious fangs in his mouth.

Lorraine was looking back and forth between the two of them, crying into her hands. Byron had long let go of Draco now and was also staring back and forth between the two of them with wide eyes, unsure of how to react to Anton's words.

Seeing him there, Anton turned to Byron and sneered as well, shaking his head at the other boy's confusion. "And you, Byron! You always took his side, didn't you? Like everyone else, you took Draco's side! I was always the monster, I was always the one who could do nothing but wrong! Even when Draco would taunt me until I assumed this form just so he could shove me into a lake of freezing

cold water and laugh, I was still the one punished!" He continued further, now turning to Draco again and watching his older cousin sneer at the accusation.

"You never knew anything and yet you blamed me! That was the damn problem!" He exploded, shoving both Draco and Byron backwards as he finally turned to Jaimee – who had cowered away in fear and uncertainty.

He laughed harshly and turned back to Byron, who looked at him in apprehension. "The damn problem was that none of you bothered to see my side! It was always about Draco! The goddamn perfect son! EVERYONE – Alex, Nadine, Elaine, you, William and Reggie! Even my own sister on some occasions would go against me! AM I EVEN A PART OF THIS FAMILY?!" He yelled, his eyes blazing as Draco finally stepped forward and raised his wand at him, pointing it directly at Anton's face.

"That's enough, Anton. You are disgracing us all. If you say another goddamn word, I will—"

"You'll what?!" The half-veela hissed dangerously and before Draco could react, he sent a powerful gust of magically enhanced wind at them, sending both Draco and Byron flying backwards and crashing violently against the hard stone surface of one of the nearby dungeon walls.

"RON! ZABINI! GET THE GIRLS OUT OF HERE!" Harry shouted at them as Anton's eyes turned back to his injured cousins and he gave another harsh sneer before walking slowly toward them, Jaimee's wand clutched tightly in his hand.

"ANTON, STOP! PLEASE—" Lorraine's voice was cut off when she was yanked away from the scene by a flustered Ron, vaguely aware that Blaise was doing the same with Hermione behind him as the four teenagers edged toward the safe corner of the tower.

Byron was the first to recover and he shot up, attempting to shoot a spell at him but Anton growled and whipped a single clawed hand at

the metamorphagus, sending the other Malfoy flying several feet away from him.

Realizing exactly who he had cornered, Anton's sneer grew as he looked down at Draco's angry eyes but the Malfoy heir easily met his snarl with his own. When the Slytherin raised his wand up at Anton's face again, the veela laughed and flung it aside. He used one clawed hand and wrapped it tightly around Draco's throat, lifting him up off the ground until his feet were suspended in mid-air.

Undaunted, Draco struggled for breath and wrestled with the grip on his throat, ignoring the screams he could hear all around them. Seeing his futile efforts, Anton smirked and looked directly at him, an animalistic gleam of sadistic pleasure in his eyes.

"Let's see how you'll like being hung upside down for an entire night in the Great Hall...huh, Draco? Maybe for once, you'll understand how I felt all those years you picked on me..." Anton hissed in a snake-like whisper.

From several feet away, Lorraine managed to free herself from Ron's restraining grip and she turned to a confused Jaimee, screaming as loud as she could.

"Jaimee! He's not himself anymore! He's consumed by too much anger; his veela senses has taken control! You have to stop him before he seriously hurts someone!"

Jaimee stiffened at her words and looked up just in time to see Anton slamming Draco against another wall, causing the Malfoy heir to cringe in pain. Frozen in place, she looked around the scene – Byron was bleeding from a cut on his left cheek and was barely able to stand from the ground, Lorraine was still struggling with Ron as he tried to keep her from rushing to her brother while Hermione was crying against Blaise who had set up a protective barrier around them.

What the bloody hell is his weakness then?! I don't know! She thought in panic, looking around again and catching sight of Draco as

Anton flung him onto the ground, pointing Jaimee's wand at the cringing Slytherin's throat.

Laughing, the half-veela spoke again, his voice tinged with a tone of smug superiority. "I'll bet it's a real riot for you now that all your girlfriends leave you for the same 'veela loser' you used to torment...Isn't it, Draco?" He taunted, pressing the wand harder against the other blonde's throat and causing Draco's eyes to glint in anger.

Before Anton could utter a spell, Jaimee raised the wand in her hand and cast a summoning charm, causing her wand to fly out of Anton's hand and surge back toward her. Once she caught it in her hand, Anton finally turned and growled at her – suddenly reminded of her presence.

"You...You're on his side too, aren't you? I'm going to hurt you as well." He hissed, finally releasing his grip on Draco's neck, allowing the Slytherin to breathe and cough out for air. Anton ignored him and headed right for Jaimee, a dangerous sneer on his face.

Over his shoulder, Harry caught sight of Byron mouthing something to her in panic and for a moment, she stared at him in confusion, trying to decipher his words.

Then, like a bullet, it hit her.

A single thought finally entered her mind and she found herself recalling Anton's words about how Draco would taunt him into hostile form before shoving him into a lake of freezing water.

Ice! He's weak to ice!

As soon as the realization dawned on her, she took a couple of steps back and waited until Anton was several feet away from her, his clawed hands already reaching for her neck.

"Come here, beautiful—"

"GLACIUS FLAVUS!"

As soon as the words left her mouth, Anton's eyes had widened in horror and he was thrown violently away from her, his face grimacing in pain as the powerful blast of ice enveloped him completely and sent him reeling towards the ground.

Jaimee watched cautiously, keeping her distance, as Anton's veela features contorted in agony before they slowly faded away and began to reassume his handsome, otherwise cringing human face. The wings on his back closed in on his battered body before they finally disappeared, leaving him weak and frail as he struggled to pick himself back up.

When all he seemed capable of doing was crawling backwards and leaning his back helplessly against the wall, Jaimee slowly stepped toward him, keeping her wand pointed at his chest lest he suddenly attacked her again.

Anton merely looked up at her, his eyes filled with a mixture of pain, humiliation and anger. He let them drop to the ground, his normally proud stance looking completely defenseless as he sat there, leaning against the wall in the far corner of the tower.

"I concede...You win, Jaimee..."

She was so surprised by his sudden surrender and the coarse, defeated whisper that had issued from his lips that she almost failed to notice Draco walking up behind her. He reached forward and took the wand from her hand, pointing it directly at Anton's crestfallen face.

"Draco, wait—"

Ignoring her protests, Draco leaned down and pressed the wand threateningly against his cousin's throat, causing the other Malfoy to cringe and shut his eyes in anticipation of the pain that was to follow. A blonde figure had thrown itself in front of Anton's cowering form, however, causing Draco to freeze in mild surprise.

Blinking, Draco found himself staring at Lorraine's pleading eyes as she clutched her brother's weak form protectively against her own.



She spoke softly, her voice shaking with raw emotions. "Please don't hurt him, Draco...If anything, he was right. We have been favoring you above anything else... I didn't even realize it until he said so. If he made a lot of mistakes, you did too. We all did." She whispered, causing Draco's eyes to flash at her words.

"Mistakes?! I do not make mistakes, Lorraine! That stupid piece of vermin you call a brother has been making a fool out of me for years! I—"

"Draco...I think Lorraine's right. That's enough." Byron suddenly cut in as he stepped forward, drawing Draco's attention to the uncharacteristically solemn expression on his face. Both he and Lorraine stepped in front of Anton, shielding him from the outstretched wand in Draco's hand.

He ignored their words, however, and shoved past them, stepping forward and aiming a kick at Anton's sides, purposely overlooking the defeated look in the other Malfoy's face when the half-veela cringed in pain. "If you ever come near Jaimee again, I'll—"

"Draco, stop it!!"

Hearing the anger in Jaimee's voice, Draco froze and whirled around. As soon as he met her face, she yanked her wand from his grasp and shoved it back inside her pocket. He saw the open accusation in her eyes and he felt another surge of anger erupt in his chest before he lunged at her, yanking her roughly towards him.

"Why are you taking his side all of a sudden?! Did you not see how much of a bastard he is?! Are you honestly being that stupid again, Potter?! Are you defending him now despite everything he's done?!" He snapped furiously at her, causing her to cringe at the rage she heard in his voice.

She met his furious glare with a calm one of her own, her eyes slowly turning to regard the half-veela with a sense of uncertainty and pity. "Yes, he's been an arse...But then again, so have you. And to be honest...I think I understand a bit now where he was coming from."

She began softly but another voice cut her off, causing her to whirl around in surprise.

“Harry! You can’t be serious! For once, I agree with Malfoy! Kick that ugly veela’s arse to hell! He could have seriously injured you back there! He deserves to get hurt!” Ron suddenly burst out, suddenly directing everyone’s attention to him.

Hermione seemed livid at his words and looked as though she was going to shush him but Blaise held her back upon seeing the unadulterated anger in Lorraine’s eyes. The female Malfoy had stood up and turned to the Gryffindor with a menacing glare on her face.

“Ugly veela?! What do you call me then, RON?!” She screeched and for a split second – just quick enough for Ron to see – her face had flashed into a hostile form similar to Anton’s, causing Ron to gasp and hurriedly step back, stumbling to the floor in horror.

“H—Holy Merlin! Y—You’re like him?! Y—You can turn into—?”

“An ugly monster?! Yes, I suppose I can, Ron... Are you disgusted with me now too?” She asked sarcastically, causing Ron to pale in realization.

“I didn’t mean it that way—”

Jaimee ignored them and turned to Draco, who was now glaring at her with a look of angry betrayal in his eyes. “This isn’t about taking sides, Draco...I just don’t want you to hurt him. This little thing between the two of you has got to stop.” She whispered, looking directly into his icy glare, unaware of the way Anton’s eyes were now looking at her in shock and disbelief.

“Why shouldn’t I?! Why are you defending him?! He hurt me, Potter...And more importantly...He hurt you.” Draco hissed, his eyes narrowing into dangerous slits as he watched the emotions running across her face.

At this, Jaimee turned and looked carefully at Anton once more, noting the humiliated flush on the other Malfoy’s cheeks. “Yes, he did.

But he...He stopped when he could have very well gone on and finished me off. I'm sure you saw that too, Draco." She told him, causing Anton to cringe again, refusing to meet any of their gazes.

Jaimee looked at his frail form for a long moment, noting the defeated, humbled look on his face. Then, turning back to Draco, she took a deep breath before speaking again – raising a single hand and gently cupping his face to implore him. "He's...He's your cousin, Draco...He's...He's family...You don't even know how lucky you are to have one..." She whispered, looking up and watching Draco's eyes darken ominously at her words.

He stood there for a long silent moment, his jaw clenched tightly in barely-contained anger. His eyes traveled slowly from hers to Anton before moving back and piercing right through hers once more. Jaimee winced at the pure fury she saw in them, noting that just last night; those same eyes had looked at hers with so much longing and tenderness. Now, however, they were looking at her with contempt and deceit.

As though her touch had burned him, he placed his hand over the one she had on his cheek and flung it away, causing her to step back in slight hurt at his rejection. Without another word, he shot her one last sneer before he shoved past her and strode out of the tower, causing her to wince again when she heard him slam the exit door loudly behind him.

As soon as he was gone, she blinked and looked up to see everyone staring awkwardly at one another in silence. Ron's face was frozen in horror and Lorraine was still glaring at him, daring him to say anything else. Hermione stepped forward and placed a hand gently on Harry's shoulder, causing the other girl to turn and give the brunette a weak, reassuring smile.

"I'm fine, Hermione...I'm just exhausted." She managed to say, watching as Hermione let go of Blaise's hand and pulled her gently into a hug.

"You won, Harry...That's all that matters. Now you don't have to worry about Anton anymore." She spoke again and at the mention of

his name, Anton looked away from the scene and allowed both Byron and Lorraine to help him back up on his feet.

Supporting Anton up by his shoulders, Byron turned and gave Jaimee a half-hearted wink. "Nice moves, Potter... It's been a long time since I've seen a girl kick a guy's arse so well like you do." He teased, causing Jaimee to laugh softly in spite of herself.

When the three Malfoys looked as though they were going to leave, Jaimee spoke up once more, this time directing her attention to the one in the middle.

"Anton..."

The blonde in question cringed at hearing his name but stopped, turning around slowly to meet her steady gaze. He blinked in disbelief when he saw that the expression in her eyes was no longer hatred nor anger but was filled with sympathy.

Realizing this, his pride got the better of him and he glared at her, shrugging Byron and Lorraine's arms off. "I don't need your pity, Potter! So now you know the whole pathetic history behind me...Sod off! I don't need you to defend me!" He snapped at her.

Ron's eyes narrowed and he would have lunged for the half-veela again when Harry held him back, shaking her head. Turning once more to Anton's glare, she spoke in a soft but firm voice. "You don't have my pity, Anton. I still think you're despicable...The way you act before thinking...The way you use your veela allure to play with all those women...Everything you've done so far deserves nothing but contempt and disgust." She told him, her voice cold and harsh.

Lorraine looked as though she was going to say something again but Jaimee continued, keeping her eyes focused solely on Anton as she spoke.

"But I'd just like to say...I'm sorry."

Her last two words caused all three figures behind her – Blaise, Ron and Hermione – to step back in shock. Likewise, Anton had blinked

and looked at her as though she was insane but he didn't say anything, listening intently to what she had to say.

"It seems... I hated you for all the wrong reasons. I was bullied as a child by my cousin too...So I know how it may feel." She continued, causing Byron and Lorraine to look at her in surprise. Anton continued to remain silent, the defensive sneer on his face slowly disappearing into a skeptical grimace.

"Don't get me the wrong way...I'm not forgiving you. Not at all. I just...I just want you to know that I don't hate you. Not...anymore." She finished, taking a long deep breath. The pain from the wounds all over her body finally began to register in her mind and she collapsed against Ron behind her, barely able to remain standing.

Again, another moment of awkward silence fell upon them.

Anton stared at her with an overwhelming mixture of amazement and a growing admiration. Then, as though it pained him to do so, a weak, bitter laugh escaped his lips and he shook his head, finally relenting and giving her somewhat a shadow of a smile.

"You...Are truly something, Potter..."

Hearing the anger gone from his words, Byron's face finally broke out into a wide, knowing grin and he turned his own pair of admiring eyes towards the Gryffindor, who blushed and looked at the two Malfoys in confusion.

"She is, isn't she? Draco's got himself a rare find. You should have seen Grandfather's face when she told him off..." He said out loud, causing the pain on Anton's face to disappear momentarily as he turned wide, amused eyes to Byron, daring him to take back his words.

"No way...She spoke against Grandfather?" He asked, managing a weak laugh as both Malfoys turned back and looked at Jaimee again but the Gryffindor was now as red as the tie of Hermione's uniform.

“What?!” She snapped, looking back and forth between the two boys in growing annoyance.

Anton’s eyes sobered after that and he looked into her eyes once more, all the anger and animosity from his face replaced with calm acceptance and deep gratitude.

“I...Th—Thank you...Harry...”

With that, the half-veela inclined his head toward her in a bow before turning around and giving Byron a small smile. “Byron...I think I’d like to go home to France now. It’s been awhile since I’ve had some of Grandmother’s specialty pumpkin soup.” He drawled lightly and at the implication of his words, Byron laughed and nodded in both relief and understanding.

Lorraine had let go of her brother and stood watching Byron support him to the exit. She glanced back at Jaimee every now and then, a strange expression in her bright blue eyes. As the two Malfoy sons walked away, she made out their surprisingly light-hearted conversation and she found the insane urge to laugh and cry at the same time.

“Well...Finally got your arse kicked didn’t you? I told you a girl would hurt you soon enough.”

“Yeah, I suppose I did...At least I lasted long. I doubt you’d last ten minutes. What could you do? Make her laugh by stretching your nose, Pinocchio?”

“Oh haha...Very funny, veela-boy. Since when did you grow a sense of humor?”

Their voices eventually trailed off as the door shut behind them, leaving Lorraine standing there and staring uncertainly at Harry. Then, laughing at her embarrassment, she rushed forward and pulled the other girl into a tight hug, tears finally streaming from her eyes.

“L—Lorraine...?”

Unsure of how to respond, Jaimee placed her hands awkwardly on her back and reluctantly returned the hug until the blonde pulled back and gave her one last smile. "Thank you for understanding, Harry...I really hope you choose Draco. You may be the only one who can make this family human again..." She managed to say and she gave the Gryffindor girl one last tight hug before sighing and hurrying after her brother and cousin.

Jaimee blushed darkly upon hearing this, feeling a comforting warmth in her chest at the other girl's words and she allowed a small smile, shaking her head at the unexpected turn of events that had happened. Ron looked as though he wanted to run after Lorraine but instead, the red-head swallowed the lump in his throat and turned away, his eyes clouded over in guilt and confusion. Seeing the troubled expression on his face, Hermione walked over to him and squeezed his hand, causing him to look up and reward her with a forced smile.

"I think you owe her an apology, Ron." She told him gently and for once, Ron didn't argue with her. He nodded and stepped back, shoving his hands dejectedly into his pockets.

Harry, however, barely heard them. She wasn't so sure how long she was staring stupidly at the door with a strange, far-off expression on her face until Blaise had finally walked up behind her, causing her to jump in surprise when he touched her arm to get her attention.

"Potter...He's in the Astronomy tower..."

"Anton...He promised me the world...I want to be with him."

Elisa's softly spoken words echoed again and again in his head. Draco forced his eyes shut and buried his face in his hands, wanting nothing more than to drown out the harsh memory.

He couldn't believe it was happening again.

Anton had made a fool out of him more times than he could possibly remember and now that he had finally found the one woman he actually loved; it was going to happen again. He didn't think he could bear another woman dumping him for the wretched veela and the

very thought of Harry leaving him for Anton sent an anger coursing through him that he never knew or felt before.

In his mind, he imagined Jaimee with Anton in the same passionate encounter they had last night – the beautiful Gryffindor laden in his arms, their limbs entangled together in an intimate embrace. The very image sent a sharp dagger through Draco's chest and he felt a fierce fire erupting within him, forcing his hands to clench tightly into fists.

I can't believe she defended him...Does she want to be with him now?! Is that what this is all about?! He thought angrily and though somewhere in the back of his mind – he knew he was being irrational – it didn't stop him from letting his thoughts feed his anger, allowing it to grow until he could no longer think of anything else.

He stiffened when he heard the door to the Astronomy tower open behind him and he didn't have to turn around to see who it was. Instead, he kept his angry glare focused on the window, watching the horde of students making their way to breakfast and pointedly ignored the figure who had now taken one of the empty classroom seats just behind him.

She sat there for a long moment, watching him in silence before Draco finally felt his ire snap and he whirled around, his silver eyes flashing at her in warning.

"What do you want, Potter?! What are you doing here?!" He snapped, narrowing his eyes when he saw the calm look on her beautiful features.

In spite of himself, he almost rushed out to her in concern when he saw the painful wounds on her arms and legs but he sneered instead, keeping himself firmly in place.

The look on her face was gentle as she stood up and walked over to him, placing one hand on his shoulder. "Draco...I want to talk about what happened back there." She began and when he didn't pull away, she slowly sat down beside him.



Taking a deep breath, she forced out the question she had meant to ask him from the very beginning. "Everything Anton had said back there...Was it true? Did you really bully him when you were children...?" She made sure to keep her voice devoid of any emotion but Draco snapped anyway, shoving her away from him and bolting up from his seat.

"What does it matter?! You don't even know that bastard and you're defending him?! Do you know how many times he's hurt me or does that not matter to you?!" He raged at her and for a moment, he forgot himself as he yanked her by her shirt and lifted her off the ground, her feet dangling in mid-air.

Harry's eyes widened in alarm at his hostility but she refused to let it show, watching the fires in Draco's eyes glowing brighter in anger.

"What are you trying to say, Potter?! That you want to be with him? Is that it?! Are you wishing that he had beaten you back there?!" He hissed, tightening his grip on her as he lifted her up higher and pushed her so that her back was pressing against the wall.

"Draco, you are putting words in my mouth! Calm down! I just want to know—"

"Yes! Alright?! I did! I bullied the stupid girly-boy when he was a kid! I made fun of him the same way I picked on you in first year! In fact, he had it worse! My family never knew! Was that what you wanted to hear?! Now, what?! Are you going to call me a disgusting jerk and go to him?!" He exploded and the anger on his face was undeniable. Even Harry – his enemy for seven years – had never seen it before.

Instead of reacting to it, however, she merely inclined her head once and answered him in a soft voice. "Thank you for being honest with me." When she didn't seem to say anything after that, the anger on Draco's face reluctantly gave way to irritated confusion.

"That's it?! The great and perfect Potter is not going to climb up on her noble high horse again and lecture me about proper morals, not picking on people and all that rubbish?!" He mocked, sneering at the look on her face.

To his surprise, Jaimee just looked up at him blankly for several seconds before her face broke out into a knowing smirk. Before he could say anything, she raised a single fist and punched him right in the eye, forcing him to step back and drop her back onto the floor.

“Ow! Bloody hell, Potter! What was that for?!”

As he clutched his eye in pain, she stifled a laugh and stepped back, watching him struggling to contain his anger. When he didn't seem too amused by her stunt, she took a deep breath and turned his face to hers, reaching over to brush a lock of hair from his eyes.

“I can't blame you for something that happened a long time ago, Draco. If I did, then I could never have forgotten all those years of rivalry between the two of us.” She began carefully, watching the anger slowly dissipating from his eyes.

When he didn't respond, she continued to speak. “I know you've grown up since then...I just wanted to hear the truth from you. I don't like hating people for the wrong reasons.”

At this point, she would have left him alone and walked out of the room but the emotional exhaustion seemed to take its toll on him as well and he collapsed weakly into her arms, pulling her against him in a tight, possessive embrace.

He didn't say anything but he shook with all the words he left unsaid. Feeling him trembling against her, Harry wrapped her arms tighter around him, giving him a reassuring kiss on the cheek.

I love you so much...

The words were aching to spill out of his mouth but still he held them back, knowing that there was a proper time to tell her exactly how he felt. Instead of saying them out loud, he squeezed her tighter and let his actions speak of his feelings for her.

They stood there for a long, comfortable silence – hugging each other tightly and reveling in the warmth emanating from the other's body.

Draco was the one who spoke up first and he surprised her when all the anger in his voice seemed to have disappeared and was now tinged with heavy amusement and realization.

“Potter...? I do believe this is my shirt you’re wearing.”

Jaimee felt blood rushing into her cheeks but she welcomed his open willingness to change the subject and looked up, easily meeting his teasing smile with one of her own.

“You ripped my shirt, Malfoy. I figured a few bloodstains and rips on yours would make us even.” She kidded lightly, gesturing to the shirt she was wearing and to the stains of blood on it from the wounds on her body.

Although Draco managed a weak laugh at her quip, his eyes had clouded over in concern and he finally pulled away to inspect her injuries, inadvertently causing the Gryffindor to wince in pain when he accidentally pressed a tender bruise on her upper arm.

“I’m sorry...”

She heard the worry in his voice and in an effort to reassure him, she forced another laugh and pushed his hands away, attempting to draw his attention with a poorly made up joke. “I’m fine. Nothing a trip to the infirmary won’t fix. Besides...These injuries are nothing compared to sleeping with you last night. I had no idea you were so rough—”

“Did I hurt you?” She stopped when she heard the evident dread in his voice and upon looking up and seeing his dismay; she hastily shook her head and gave him an embarrassed smile.

“I was kidding, Draco. I’m really fine. Anton was a bit harder to fend off than I expected—” She was forced to stop when Draco reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out a white handkerchief, using it to wipe off the smear of blood on her forehead.

After tossing the now blood-stained handkerchief to the nearest table, he then proceeded to yank her shirt impatiently over her head, instantly causing Jaimee to exclaim loudly in horror.

“Malfoy, what are you doing?! Why are you taking my shirt off, are you crazy?!” She screeched, attempting to wrestle his hands away but again, Draco ignored her and tossed the bloodstained shirt aside, leaning down and cringing when he saw the horrible wounds and bruises all over her pale body.

Raising one finger up her lips to silence her protests, he raised his wand up to a particularly nasty open wound near her shoulder and whispered a single spell. The tip of his wand glowed a calming blue for a minute before he traced it over the wound, sealing the beautiful skin back up.

Jaimee opened her mouth to thank him but he ignored her and proceeded to heal the rest of her injuries, his eyes following his wand as he continued to trace over all the wounds on her slender body. When he got to the area just above the cleavage exposed by her bra, he leaned down and trailed his lips over the newly healed skin, causing her cheeks to heat up in desire.

Feeling her shivering at his ministrations, he smirked before he leaned back and shrugged off the jacket he wore, placing it over her and zipping it back up to cover her bare form. When he saw the irritated flush on her face, he shook his head and gave her a teasing grin.

“If I recall from last night, Potter...You seemed to like it hot and rough. All these lovely scratches on my back prove it.” He drawled and more than anything, his words caused the blush on her cheeks to intensify. She hastily tore her gaze away from him and settled on staring at the wall over his shoulder.

He laughed at her reaction, loving the adorable flush on her face and the way she was struggling to keep her red face straight. Seeing her embarrassment was all too amusing for him and he couldn't resist teasing her further, giving her another self-satisfied smirk.

“By the way... Speaking of last night, you owe me an apology, Harry. This morning, I woke up to an empty bed and a cold pillow beside me.

What do you have to say for yourself?" He asked, shaking his head and narrowing his eyes at her in mock disapproval.

She glared at him, yanking herself out of his arms and self-consciously pulling his jacket tighter around her body. When she didn't answer him, Draco continued to speak, crossing his arms and giving her his best Head Boy glare.

"Ten points from Gryffindor, Miss Potter."

At this, her green eyes flashed dangerously and she gaped at him, choking in shock and shoving him away from her in anger. "Ten points?! For what, Malfoy?!" She shouted at him, her hackles rising when the smirk on Draco's face grew and he shot her a superior smile.

"For seducing the Head Boy and leaving him hanging for more the very next morning." He teased further, suppressing a smile when he saw her face flushing with resentment.

"What?! You can't do that—" Before she could protest further, he pulled her against him again, leaning down and muffling her words by catching her lips in a deep, sensual kiss.

The minute his lips had pressed against hers, she forgot all about why she was angry in the first place and linked her arms around his neck, pulling their bodies closer together. When his hands traveled down to grip her hips, she winced in pain again.

Unfortunately for her, Draco seemed to notice and he pulled back – looking down at the unhealed wounds on her legs before he sighed and pressed his forehead against hers, one hand reaching up and caressing her cheek.

"I was scared this morning, you know..."

She blinked and looked at him in confusion, her eyebrows fusing together in query at the sudden serious note of his voice. "What do you mean?" She asked him, reaching up and guiding his hand to her mouth, giving it a kiss.

Draco smiled at the tender gesture, using the same hand to tuck a strand of stray hair behind her ear. "I was afraid I would lose you to him." He said softly, his whisper barely audible but she seemed to hear him and she closed her eyes, savoring the feel of his warm fingers on her skin.

When she opened her mouth to answer him, Draco had hoisted her up to sit on the large teacher's table behind them, silencing her words with another kiss. Then, without saying anything, he reached both hands down and gently unclasped her jeans, sliding it carefully off her legs and exposing the horrible cuts and bruises on her skin.

"Draco, don't—" She felt another hot, embarrassed blush on her cheeks and she tried to take her pants back from his hands but he slung it carefully over the chair behind him before kneeling down in front of her, raising his wand and igniting its tip with another healing glow.

To her dismay, he began healing the wounds on her legs the same way he had done awhile ago – trailing it so gently along her skin that it would have tickled her had she not been so embarrassed about the entire situation and the closeness of his face against her legs.

Once the wounds were completely gone, he ran one strong hand along the now silky smooth skin of her leg. His fingers burned against her skin like liquid fire and she gasped, trying to pull away herself away from his hands. Hearing the muffled sound, Draco's eyes snapped up to lock intently with hers and he stood up, positioning himself between her legs.

Smirking, he pushed her down so that her back was pressed against the table and he followed her down, covering her beautiful body with his own. She stiffened slightly, pressing her hands up against his chest and attempting to shove him off her but his body felt like rock against her own.

To her dismay, her hands began to move of their own accord and they trailed up the strong muscles of his arms, wrapping themselves comfortably around his neck. Green locked onto steely silver once

more and she shivered at the desire she saw in his eyes, blushing when they moved hungrily up and down her body.

He reached up and tugged the zipper of the jacket covering her down, very slowly exposing to his devouring eyes the creamy, luscious body that was driving him mad with lust. He heard her breaths coming in short, shallow gasps as the last of the zipper finally ended and he found himself unable to tear his eyes away from the lovely feast before him.

Her hands moved from around his neck and pressed against his chest again, feeling his rapid heartbeat underneath her palms. When the corners of her lips quirked up into a teasing, seductive smile, Draco felt his resolve snap. He grabbed one of her legs, hoisting it up against him until it was sandwiched between their bodies.

She whimpered at the intimate contact of their hips, shutting her eyes tightly when he leaned down and kissed a trail of kisses from her throat down to just above her navel. The feelings he was igniting within her were consuming her senses that she barely noticed him leaning back and pulling his wand out of his pocket, tracing it sensually along her flushed, naked skin.

“You’re mine, Harry...Do you know that...?”

His soft, possessive hiss sent another shiver down her spine and she couldn’t find the voice to answer him. She groaned when she felt him lean forward and suck at her neck, biting hard with the obvious intention of leaving another love mark on her skin.

Just as he pulled back and claimed her lips in a hard, bruising kiss, her eyes widened in alarm and her muscles suddenly tensed when she felt the cold, hard tip of his wand pressed dangerously against the mark he had just made on her neck. She tore her lips away from him, her eyes growing wider when she saw the challenging glint in his narrowed eyes.

“Draco, what are you—”

He silenced her by pressing his wand harder against her, causing her to wince as she felt the tip pressing painfully against the pulse point in her neck. In confused panic, she began shoving against him, struggling in his arms but Draco used his free hand and easily held her arms back down, keeping her firmly in place.

“Let me go! What are you doing—”

He chuckled softly, placing a kiss on her forehead to reassure her, tightening his grip on both her hands before he leaned down to whisper something in her ear.

“I’m challenging you to a magical combat, Harry...” He murmured, nibbling lightly on her earlobe. When she stiffened even more and her eyes narrowed in suspicion, he spoke again – directing her attention to his playful smirk.

“Tomorrow night...9pm...The Room of Requirement.”

He leaned down and caught her lips in another hard kiss before he finally released her hands and pulled away, using a single flick of his wand to zip his jacket back up to cover her form. When she gasped and crawled backwards away from him, the full meaning of his words seemed to hit her and she stared, gaping at his retreating back.

“Wh—What?!”

Draco stopped and turned around, looking amused at her confusion.

“It’s time to make you mine, Potter.”

With that, the Head Boy gave her one last haughty sneer before he turned and stalked out of the room, slamming the door shut behind him and leaving her sputtering like an idiot, hurriedly yanking her clothes back on her half-naked body.

The last thing Draco heard was the sound of a heavy shoe being thrown against the classroom door followed by a loud, indignant shriek from the boy-turned-girl-who-lived.



“DRACO MALFOY, YOU POMPOUS, ARROGANT JERK!”

A/N: And he is, isn't he? :giggles: I hope you all enjoyed this chapter! I apologize if many of you seemed to have expected Anton to remain an ass throughout the entire story. I really did intend for this to happen. Let's all get to know him a bit more shall we?

Next Chapter: (Draco vs. Harry) + Violence + Sexual Tension. What more could you guys want? :wink:

I apologize if Draco still hasn't said the three magical words yet. He has a reason for this, I promise. You'll all find out in the next chapter. :wink: I will also shed a little more light on the whole Draco-Anton family history thing in the succeeding chapters after that. (Can you say dysfunctional family? :smirk: )

Thanks to everyone who reviewed the last chapter and to everyone who left me their thoughts about the deleted scene. It was much appreciated and I am looking forward to writing another one soon. :suggestive smile:

PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO REVIEW!

## Chapter 25 –Concessions & Confessions

Sighing heavily, Harry looked down at her untouched lunch the following afternoon with a thoughtful expression on her face. Beside her, Ron was strangely picking at the food on his plate as well and looked as though something was troubling him. Hermione, on the other hand, was seated in the opposite side of the room with the Slytherins next to Blaise and was conversing animatedly with several of the Italian heir's friends.

Unfortunately, Jaimee paid neither of her two best friends any attention. She found herself staring blankly into her plate and going over in her mind what was to happen that night. Draco had finally challenged her to a magical combat – that much was for certain. Whether or not she wanted to win or lose against him, however, was an entirely different matter in itself. She didn't know how she would be able to hold up against him later after everything that's happened.

Blushing, she blinked and looked up quickly to find Draco staring intently at her from across the room. When he saw her looking at him, one corner of his lips quirked upwards into a playful smirk, which she returned with a weak glare before letting her eyes drop shyly back to her food.

Is he playing with me? Does he even know how much he affects me?! Argh! She thought in frustration, burying her face in her hands. She sighed again before helping herself to a long sip of pumpkin juice, using the gesture to drown herself further in her musings.

In all honesty, she was both anxious and terrified of the idea of having to square off against him in just a few more short hours. Among all of the men she had encountered so far, Draco had been – by far – the strongest and most strategic fighter she had fought against and she was more than certain that she was up for a rather grueling battle.

However... Harry gritted her teeth in frustration and slammed her goblet back down onto the table, inadvertently causing some students to look at her in surprise. She neither wanted to win nor lose to him.

In fact, had no bloody idea as to what she wanted to happen later and that bothered her above anything else.

Why does he want to marry me?! What does he want?! She raged to herself again, looking up once more to find the Slytherin still staring at her, his eyes dark with thought and contemplation. Blaise sat beside him and was still caught up in the lively conversation with Hermione but the Head Boy looked completely disinterested in their chatter, his attentions focused completely on Harry across the room.

You...Right? He said he wanted you...? The annoyingly smug male voice pointed out in her head again and hearing the bluntness of the words caused her jaw to tighten in mild irritation. She looked at him again and her muscles tensed further when she caught sight of Pansy Parkinson take the seat next to him with a flirtatious smile on her face.

She watched as Draco gave Pansy a distracted glare before he turned back to his food, his eyes suddenly glazing over in thought. After a couple of minutes, the Malfoy heir finally stood up from his seat and left the Hall, Crabbe and Goyle – with Millicent attached firmly to his arm – following closely behind him.

Watching him leave with his friends, Jaimee sighed again and pushed her full plate of food away. Burying her face into her hands once more, she took a long deep breath and remained unaware that someone had sat down beside her, giving her a sympathetic smile.

It didn't help her mood that they had their first set of midterm exams that day and she was not as prepared as she would have liked. She knew that both McGonagall and Sluwick had a tendency to make rather grueling exams for their students and she wasn't all that excited about taking them after she had finished her lunch.

Not to mention the fact that you do nothing but stare at Draco for more than half of the entire lecture these days... The male voice inside her head mused, causing another twitch of irritation in her left eye.

"How're you holding up, kiddo...?"

She immediately jumped in both surprise and familiarity, turning sharply to find herself facing Sirius' comforting grin. Raising both eyebrows, she looked around further to see that most of the other Gryffindor students – including Ron – had already left the table and were now making their way back to the Common Room for a quick break before their afternoon exams.

"What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be at home managing business and all that?" She asked, raising an eyebrow at him in query. Sirius waved the concern away, grinning wider and giving her a reassuring nod.

"Don't worry about that right now. I thought I'd drop by Hogwarts and check up on you...You've been really popular in the tabloids these days that I just wanted to make sure you're okay." He told her, giving her a light, cajoling punch on the shoulder.

Managing a weak smile at his efforts, she nodded and leaned her head affectionately on her godfather's shoulder, allowing him to wrap a comforting arm around her shoulders.

"I'm okay; I suppose...I'm just a little tired. I stayed up all night studying for my midterms...Plus, all this pressure from all these jerks challenging me lately hasn't been helping." She admitted, her voice sounding heavily restrained.

Sirius chuckled but nodded and leaned down to give her a light kiss on the top of her head. "Ah the thrill of being a teenager. I remember it so well...I wish I could go back to those days." He commented briefly, sighing and shaking his head in amusement.

Jaimee managed a weak laugh and looked at him, giving him a knowing look. "You're not that old, Sirius. From what I've been hearing from the tabloids these days, you've become quite the love-ridden teenager yourself these days. Been hanging out a lot with Miss Regina, huh?" She teased, immediately causing Sirius to redden in embarrassment.

“Th-That’s—” He stopped himself from speaking when Harry began laughing harder, causing Sirius to sigh and eventually join in as well.

“It’s nothing like that really...We’re just trying to catch up. I don’t plan on doing anything. She’s just coming from a divorce after all...I just want to be there to support her.” He told her briefly, causing the Gryffindor’s eyebrows to rise up in shock.

“You do realize how responsible and mature you sounded just now, right?” She asked bluntly, causing Sirius to give her a scowl.

“I can be responsible sometimes, Harry.” He growled, causing her to smile again but comply, shaking her head in amusement. It was another couple of minutes that she spoke again and this time, the serious tone of her question shocked him into a brief, speechless lapse.

“Sirius...What does it mean to...be...to be a...girl?”

Blinking at the unexpected question, Sirius struggled to find the right words to say. “U—Uhm...Well, uh...I’m not so sure I’m the best person to be telling you about these things Harry. I’m really terrible with women! Much less being one! Ehehe...” He rushed out, his voice cracking in nervousness.

Surprisingly enough, Harry looked deadly serious. She gave him an imploring look, her green eyes wide and pleading. “Please, Paddy...? I really do want to know...What does it take to be a girl? What does it mean to be one...?” She asked again, tugging self-consciously at the bandages that bound her breasts down underneath her uniform.

Sirius coughed and looked around them in embarrassment, making sure no one was looking before he answered her. “Er...Uhm...I’m not entirely sure. Although I do know that binding your breasts, cross-dressing as a guy and wearing your hair like that is not the way to go about it.” He teased, causing the girl to instantly flush and yank the ties around the black strands, letting them cascade gently down to her shoulders.

“So to be a girl...I have to wear a dress and keep my hair down?” She asked, her eyes looking desperately confused and innocent that Sirius didn’t have the heart to tease her further.

“Of course not, Prongslet...I’ve always believed that what differentiated men from women is that they’re more sensitive and in touch with their emotions than men are. But what brought this on all of a sudden? Are you okay...?” He asked gently, reaching over and affectionately ruffling her hair.

Jaimee blushed and looked away, biting her lip and fidgeting uncomfortably. “I...honestly don’t know...I’ve been thinking about a lot of things lately. Especially about who I am...I’m a little confused.” She admitted, sighing heavily as she leaned back against the table.

When she caught his blank look, she sighed again and attempted to explain herself further. “I mean...I don’t know if I’m still Harry or...If I’m this...woman...that I don’t even know. Lately, I think I’m becoming more and more of a real girl each day.” She muttered, her chest heavy with exhaustion.

Sirius shook his head and tilted her chin up to meet his eyes, surprising her with the genuine affection and concern she saw in them. “Hey...No one’s forcing you to rush this, Harry. It’s not just you... This is the age where all of you are trying to figure out who you are.” He began uncertainly, watching as Jaimee nodded intently to what he was saying.

“It’s probably a lot more difficult for you considering your change of gender but I’m sure you’ll pull through...You’re always been strong. Just like your mother and father. Everything is going to be work out, I promise.” He told her, giving her a kiss on the forehead.

Jaimee sighed and nodded, giving him a grateful smile. “I understand...I’m sorry. I suppose all these female hormones are starting to affect my emotions.” She kidded weakly, causing Sirius to give her a smile and successfully divert her attention with something else.

“They don’t seem to affect your testosterone level when it comes to kicking arse, huh? I heard about that fight you won against Anton Malfoy.” He smirked, causing Jaimee to redden slightly in embarrassment. “Although I think he would have deserved to have you finish him off...I think you dealt with that quite nicely.” He reassured her, grinning at the memory.

Before she could attempt to draw his attention off the topic, he looked directly into her eyes and spoke again in a firm voice. “Now...About your fight later with Draco...Are you ready?”

At the mention of the Slytherin’s name, Harry visibly flinched and began to blush, causing Sirius’ eyes to narrow dangerously as he eyed the reaction of emotions on her face. Her cheeks were colored delicately and she had unconsciously yanked her school shirt collar tighter, drawing his attention to her pale neck.

The sight that greeted him, however, wasn’t exactly what he had been expecting to see. He blanched in anger, his eyes widening at the sight of the blatant red love marks trailing all over his goddaughter’s pale skin.

Shaking under the dangerous gleam of destruction in his eyes, Harry managed a weak laugh and rubbed her hand over the marks, giving him an overly cheerful smile. “Stupid mosquitoes kept me awake last night. They kept biting—”

“Your neck?!”

She cringed against his tone, backing slightly away from him when she literally saw the obvious sparks of fury emanating her godfather’s tense form.

“Sirius, these are—”

She broke off when Sirius had pointed his wand directly at her and muttered a single word, causing both her eyebrows to lift up in confusion.

“Corpusio Amor.”

Still confused, she stared blankly at her hands as her entire body began to glow a faint shade of pink before quickly dimming and allowing her to look up just in time to see the look of murderous rage in Sirius' gray eyes.

"Sirius? What did you just—"

"You had sex within the last 48 hours! With who?! Tell me and I might consider sparing him a few of his limbs." He growled loudly and menacingly, baring his teeth and obviously forgetting that he was not in his animagus form.

Jaimee's eyes widened and she looked around in panic, hastily making sure no one had heard them before she turned back to Sirius, her voice falling into a shaky whisper when she saw his face contorted in anger. "Paddy, I—"

"DON'T 'PADDY' ME! WHO'S THE BASTARD WHO DARED TO TOUCH YOU WITHOUT A RING?! IT'S THAT PERVERT MALFOY, ISN'T IT?!" The ex-convict never bothered to finish his sentence as he sprang up from his seat and charged down the hall, causing Jaimee to give a helpless meep of desperation.

"SIRIUS, WAIT! I WANTED HIM TO, IT WASN'T HIS FAULT! I— Shit!" She caught herself, her jaw hanging open in embarrassment when she looked around and was met with the gossip-hungry faces of all the other students around her.

She began to blush profusely and was about to save her face when Sirius shouted at her again, his voice echoing from where he had already managed to reach the main entrance to the Great Hall. Still growling, he stopped right in front of the entrance and whirled around dramatically to face her.

"I'M GOING TO TEAR HIS CROTCH RIGHT OFF!"

Hearing his words, she sat there with wide, horrified eyes, all the other students staring at her and laughing in heavy amusement. She blinked and instantly tore off after him in alarm – obviously not



wanting her maniacal godfather ripping Draco to shreds once he found him.

“SIRIUS, WAIT! DON’T DO THAT! THEN HOW WILL I—GAAAAH!” She screeched at herself before tearing after him, tugging persistently at his arm with her full weight and effectively managing to slow down Sirius’ rampant chase as he literally found that he had to drag her across the floor.

“HARRY, LET GO OF MY ARM DAMMIT! I AM GOING TO CASTRATE THAT ARROGANT BRAT!” Instead of heeding his words, Jaimee clung on tighter to him until she was practically skidding on her feet along the corridor floors, Sirius tugging angrily at her like a wild bull.

A loud pop and a puff of smoke later, Jaimee started screaming out loud as she was dragged on her feet on the floor by a large, shaggy black dog. It barked furiously and ran faster, dragging her along behind him as she clung to its tail until she eventually yelped and tripped. She screeched loudly when she landed on her stomach and began skidding along the floor behind him, wincing and shouting every now and then for people to jump out of their way.

They found Draco up ahead in the middle of a large group of seventh year Slytherins. The blonde looked busy tutoring some of his friends but the minute he saw them, his eyes widened uncharacteristically – first in hilarity then in panic when he saw the fury in the dog’s deadly eyes.

He turned quickly to look at Harry but seeing the Gryffindor’s panicked look of warning at him, he immediately took the hint and began backing away, keeping his footsteps slow and steady.

“Nice doggy...N—nice...Doggy...?”

Sirius stopped right in front of him and bared his teeth, a low growl coming from his throat as the sharp teeth in his mouth gleamed menacingly at the blonde, forcing him to back away.

“H—Harry...C—Can you get him away from me...?”

“I’m trying—”

Draco’s face paled and his calm voice broke when the grip Harry had on Sirius’ tail broke and the dog jumped at him, its teeth bared and ready to clamp down onto his flesh.

“YARGH! POTTER!! KEEP THAT THING AWAY FROM ME!”

Draco broke into a run just as Sirius had managed to free himself from Harry’s grasp again and ran after him, barking madly as they tore through the crowd of shocked Hogwarts students making their way through the corridor.

“PADFOOT! COME BACK HERE!” Harry yelled after them, wincing when she saw Sirius jump up and attempt to tackle Draco to the ground, barely missing by a couple of inches.

The Malfoy heir gave a rather undignified and un-Malfoyish squeak of fear and ducked behind a suit of armor, panicking further when Sirius had managed to rip the suit of armor’s head right off with his teeth.

“BLOODY HELL! YOU COULD SERIOUSLY HURT SOMEONE, BLACK! YARGH—!”

Harry couldn’t help herself.

Leaning against the wall behind her in exhaustion, she ignored the students coming up to her to ask her what was wrong and finally burst out into a fit of uncontrollable giggles, her shoulders heaving shakily with mirth and amusement.

In an utterly comical and bizarre way, both Sirius and Draco had actually cheered her up despite everything – whether or not they had actually intended to in the first place. All the same, she felt better...Even if it had been at their expense.

Hearing her laughter, Draco shouted angrily at her as he passed by and made to round the corner; a barking, snarling black dog right at his heels.

“GET HIM AWAY FROM ME!”

“You sure you want to go in there alone, Harry?” Hermione asked nervously as she and Ron escorted their best friend to the entrance of the Room of Requirement later that evening. Their exams had just finished that day and since all three Gryffindors were exhausted, they had made the trip to the Room of Requirement in silence.

Taking a deep breath, Harry blinked herself out her thoughts gave a resolute nod before giving them a reassuring smile – betrayed only by the nervous pounding of her heart in her chest.

“I’m just a little drained out...I’ll be fine, ‘Mione. I beat him once, I can do it again. No problem.” She stated firmly although Hermione’s eyebrow lifted slowly at the trembling and uncertainty in her voice.

“I know, Harry...But do you want to win?” She asked her again and at her pointed look, Jaimee’s eyes widened in alarm and she laughed nervously to hide her shock. “O—Of course I do! It’s Dra—Malfoy! I’m going to beat him to a pulp! R—Right Ron?” She pressed further, nudging the redhead several times for confirmation.

Ron gave a derisive scoff and shrugged at her. “If you say so, Harry...In any case, good luck in there.” He added, patting her encouragingly on her shoulder. Nodding in affirmation, she gave him a quick smile before she raised her wand to open the entrance, watching with bated breath as the door slowly opened to reveal a large, readily prepared battle arena inside.

Seeing this, Ron and Hermione’s eyes widened and they peered inside to take a look. “Hmm... Looks like the room of requirement knew exactly what you needed once again, huh? Good thing nobody else knows about this fight or you’ll probably have a crowd in here.” Ron commented, grinning in amazement at the row of weapons that were lining both ends of the walls.

Harry could only nod wordlessly, her eyes wide as she inspected the large swords and spears that hung from the walls. Also along the walls were small fire torches that allowed the chamber an eerie glow of orange light that casted several shadows along the center. Staring briefly into one of the flames, she caught a glimpse of a solitary figure in the far corner of the room and her heart skipped a beat at the familiar proud stance.

"Be careful, Harry...Is Malfoy in there already?" Hermione asked uncertainly, her voice shaking slightly with concern and trepidation. Without speaking, Jaimee nodded once more and carefully turned to both her friends, loosening the jacket she wore.

"Here." She offered, handing Ron the black jacket and straightening her uniform. Giving them one last reassuring smile, she shoved her wand into her pocket and stepped inside the room, steeling her nerves for the fight ahead. She felt a small hand reach out and grip her tightly on her arm, causing her to whirl around in surprise to meet Hermione's worried brown eyes.

"Be careful, okay?" She whispered, leaning forward and pulling the black-haired girl into a tight hug. Jaimee returned her hug briefly before she finally pulled away and stepped into the room, raising her wand and slowly closing the entrance door shut behind her.

She caught a glimpse of Ron and Hermione's encouraging, worried looks at her just before the door finally closed and she was left alone, the faint light from the wall torches casting several shadows on her nervous face.

Taking a few steps further into the room, she noticed that the figure she had seen in the far corner of the room had disappeared and she couldn't find traces of Draco anywhere save for the jacket that hung from the other side of the wall across from her and his bag in one of the room's corners.

"Draco...?" She called out uncertainly, irritated at herself when she heard her own voice come out in a soft and shaky whisper.

“Y—You know the rules...Right? First one to pass out or concede...Loses...” She rushed out nervously, cringing in irritation when one of the flames of the nearby torches flicked dramatically, casting a glare in her eyes and causing her to squint.

She was answered by his soft, amused chuckle somewhere behind her but before she could turn around towards it, a pair of strong arms circled around her waist, pulling her backwards against a warm, firm chest.

Gasping in surprise, blood rushed hastily into her cheeks when she felt him lean down to drop feather-light kisses on her neck, the arms he had wrapped around her small waist tightening possessively until she was comfortably trapped in his arms.

Shivering at the intimate contact, she closed her eyes just as his lips trailed upwards to nip at her ear, successfully causing her breath to hitch in her throat. She could almost see the self-satisfied smirk on his face as he finally spoke, his warm breath tickling her ear and causing goosebumps to erupt all over her body.

“Hello, love...”

She blushed at his use of an endearment, her heart pounding harder in her chest when his hands snaked downwards and began caressing the curve of her hips. Hearing another sexy chuckle from him, she closed her eyes and leaned against him, inhaling softly and sighing when she took in his familiar scent.

“Are you scared...?” He asked softly, his voice calm and steady as he let one hand reach up and trail up and down the smooth skin of her arm.

In spite of herself, Jaimee felt a playful smile tug at the corner of her lips as she answered, a feeling of déjà vu washing over her. “You wish...Malfoy...” She whispered back, smiling wider to herself when she heard a brief laugh escape his lips.

He squeezed her gently, pulling her closer against him and nuzzling her neck until she noticeably melted against him, her limbs disintegrating into a pile of shaky mush.

“Mmm...You smell good, Potter...” He murmured against her skin, pausing every now and then to nip at the marks he had already made two nights ago, making her purr in pleasure.

She was so caught up in the sweet sensations he was stirring in her that she completely failed to notice that one of his hands had snaked its way into her pocket and pulled out her wand, easily snaking its way upwards towards her neck.

As soon as she saw the faint glowing of the performed transfiguration, she realized that she had snapped out of her lust-induced stupor a little too late as Draco now pressed her sword-transfigured wand threateningly against her throat, his other hand tightening roughly around her waist.

His smile quickly transformed into a dangerous sneer and he easily kept her in place as she cursed and began to struggle violently in his arms, desperately trying to maneuver herself out of his vice-like grip.

Laughing, he used his other hand and pulled his own wand out of his pocket, transfiguring it into a similar sword. With that, he slowly raised it up into her shirt and pressed it warningly against the bare skin just above her navel.

Jaimee winced as she felt the cold steel of the sword pressing against her warm skin and she renewed her struggles, only to have Draco growl menacingly and press the swords harder against her, halting her efforts.

“Malfoy! Let me go—”

“I told you once before, Harry...You have really got to work on that ignorance of yours. If your enemies knew...It’d be much easier to beat you...” Draco drawled haughtily, smirking when she finally stopped struggling and clenched her hands into angry fists.

Clenching her teeth as she spoke, she began hissing the next words out with a heavy tone of venom in her voice. "What would you know you dirty, cheating—"

Draco laughed again and shook his head, giving her a mocking smile. "I'm a Slytherin, Harry...Of course I fight dirty...Don't you like it better that way...?" He added in a teasing whisper, leaning forward and licking her ear.

She bit down a gasp and made a conscious effort to prevent another set of shivers to erupt within her traitorous body. Instead, she stood perfectly still and let him drag her backwards towards the very corner of the room where they were both immersed into near darkness.

Narrowing his eyes, Draco released her and shoved her roughly against the wall – causing her to give a rather undignified grunt as her back hit the stone bricks behind her. Before she had the chance to attack him, he had raised both swords up against her again – one sword pointed at her throat while another pointed at her midsection.

She watched angrily as he gave her a taunting smile, his silver eyes twinkling in mischief. "Come on, Potter...Don't give me that wounded heroine look. This is still counted as a fair fight, after all..." He pointed out, chuckling when Jaimee merely growled and sneered derisively at him in response.

Lowering one of the swords, he walked right up to her and yanked her face towards his, catching her lips in a rough, bruising kiss. He kept the other sword pressed up against her neck in case she tried to fight back, smirking to himself when she gasped in surprise and opened her mouth, allowing his tongue entry into the sweet cavern of her mouth.

To his surprise, she gave a rather succulent moan and wrapped both her arms around his neck, welcoming the pressing of his body against hers. Draco felt his firm resolve fade away instantly and he lost track of his intentions in the first place as his entire body surged with desire, his hard kiss slowly becoming more desperate and gentle.

As soon as she felt his taut form melting at her ministrations, Jaimee let her own smirk grace her face and she snaked her hand around him, reaching for the disregarded sword in his other hand. When her fingers wrapped around the handle, she transfigured it back into her wand – another faint glow of light emanating from the transformation.

Unfortunately, Draco failed to notice this and she managed a lighthearted laugh before she placed both her hands on his chest and shoved him off, causing the flushed Slytherin to sputter in surprise as his other sword fell noisily from his grip and he was pushed back several steps.

“If I’m ignorant, Draco...Then you have got to stop falling for that trick. That’s the second time I kissed you and you lost yourself.” She pointed out smugly as she used her wand and summoned his dropped sword into her other hand, laughing in spite of herself when she saw Draco’s adorably confused, blushing expression.

Shaking her head, she transfigured the other sword back into Draco’s wand and held it in her other hand, pointing both wands at Draco and waiting for the Slytherin’s next move.

Then, in a flash, the confusion on his face was gone and was immediately replaced by a devious, amused smirk.

“Nice...Very Slytherin of you too, Potter...I like it...I think it’s sexy...” He murmured, taking several steps backward and pulling a very threatening-looking spear from one of the weapons adorning the walls next to them.

He smirked wider and walked back in front of her, meeting her pointed wands by assuming a perfect battle stance and beckoning her mockingly by raising an eyebrow.

Harry felt a surge of adrenaline rush into her veins as she looked directly into his steely eyes, noting the strange hints of playfulness, desire and danger all somehow mixed in the silver orbs. She tossed both their wands away from her and walked over to a nearby wall, carefully picking up a spear similar to his.



Ignoring Draco's knowing grin, she stood several meters in front of him and matched his position, pointing her spear directly at him in challenge. Seeing this, Draco smiled wider and he raised a hand, beckoning her tauntingly with his fingers. A similar smile of helpless amusement made its way onto the Gryffindor's face.

"Game time, Potter..."

Harry wasn't sure how she had managed to hear his whispered words but as soon as he had spoken, she let out a growl of exertion and lunged forward toward him, aiming the sharp end of her spear directly at his arm.

He evaded her attack with surprisingly little effort and twisted himself around her, holding his spear with both hands and shoving the wooden handle up against her neck to cut off her air supply, causing her to cough out for air. She struggled against him, gasping for breath as he pulled the wood tighter against her throat.

In a spur of quick thinking, she hurled herself upwards into a back flip over him, successfully maneuvering herself out of his strong grip and releasing herself from his hold. As soon as she managed to free herself, she took several steps backward and coughed desperately for air, holding her spear up at him to keep him at a safe distance.

Ignoring her warning, Draco lunged forward, aiming his spear right at her midsection. Harry's eyes widened and she gave a panicked yelp before ducking down, expertly using her legs as a trap for his feet and succeeding in making him stumble painfully onto the ground.

He cursed loudly as he hit the floor. He was about to flip himself back up when she climbed on top of him, straddling him between her legs and pointing her spear down at his neck.

Looking up, his eyes widened when he saw the seductive smile she was giving him and he felt a rush of lust when she leaned down until her lips brushed fleetingly against his, her efforts teasing him immensely and causing a frustrated growl to erupt from his mouth.

Before she could pull away, he shot up and caught her lips in another kiss, shoving her backwards until their positions reversed. He positioned himself on top of her, pinning her hands down – their spears forgotten on the floor beside them.

She gave another soft, pleasurable moan as she molded herself against him, her entire body arching up and aching for his touch. His hand continued to roam downwards over her body, slowly exploring every curve until it rested behind her hips where he squeezed her arse tightly, causing her to moan again. He yanked her hips against his, grinding against her and making her very aware of his growing arousal.

Almost hungrily, his tongue invaded her mouth with a purpose – pushing forcefully against hers until she eventually surrendered and let him explore as much as he wanted. Draco gave an appreciative murmur and broke their kiss to trail heated kisses down her throat, his free hand moving from behind her hips to run down the length of her leg.

When his hand eventually broke away from its hold on her arms, she inched her left hand carefully towards the spear beside them, her fingers slowly wrapping themselves around the handle. Draco, however, had sensed her actions just as she had grabbed the spear and hurled it at him, and he growled – twisting away as though she had caught on fire and seizing the other spear to block her attack.

Another loud clang was heard as their spears clashed noisily against each other and for a moment, their eyes met – bright green and glinting silver. Draco shook his head in mock disapproval over her little attempted stunt and she smirked back at him, noting that his face was still heavily flushed and he still looked pretty much aroused.

“Unfortunately for you, Draco...I know firsthand how a man works. Don’t underestimate me.” She pointed out, watching as Draco’s eyes twinkled in laughter. He shot himself up on his feet, taking several steps away from her.

“Alright...Then let’s get serious.” He drawled, waiting until she had also pulled herself back up onto her feet to stand before him. They

both stared at each other for a long moment, the expressions on their heavily flushed faces a mixture of exhilaration, danger and lust.

Then, as though snapping into action, Draco lunged forward and she barely managed to raise her spear in time to prevent a rather painful cut on the cheek before. He smirked and pushed against their pressed spears, forcing her to backwards.

Grunting in exertion, she struggled against his overwhelming strength as he pushed harder against her, the sharp edge of his spear hovering dangerously close to her face. She gave a frustrated growl and pushed her spear harder against his, forcing it away from her.

She failed to notice that Draco had now managed to push her across the room and her back was now steadily approaching the wall behind them. Her efforts were thoroughly concentrated on preventing herself from getting an unwelcome wound on the cheek.

Soon he was chuckling as he watched her face contorting with frustration. "Am I too strong for you, Harry?" He teased, grinning when her eyes fluttered open and she glared at him, the green orbs sharp like daggers pointed directly at his laughing face.

Again, Draco leaned forward over their clashed spears and caught her lips in another rough kiss. They continued to push their spears forcefully against each other's but their mouths remained passionately intertwined, their tongues battling almost as fiercely as their weapons.

Holding back a laugh at the Slytherin's sheer audacity, Harry managed to shove him back from her far enough for her to twist away, breaking their kiss and yanking herself away from him until she stood a couple of feet away.

Draco smirked and slowly lowered his spear, turning around to face her. He raised a hand to his lips, lightly touching where hers had been just seconds ago before he smiled again and took a single step toward her, blinking when she snapped her spear upwards to point directly at his chest.

“Not another step, Malfoy...Stop playing with me. I want you to take this fight seriously.” She spoke although the twinge of laughter in her eyes betrayed her solemn expression. Draco seemed convinced and Jaime was surprised to see the mirth in his eyes slowly melting away until she was staring into pools of steely gray that were emanating nothing but menace and determination.

“Very well, Harry.”

He allowed a small taunting smirk before he finally lunged forward, managing to scrape a shallow wound on her left shoulder. She yelped and ducked away, flipping herself backwards until she was at a safe enough distance from him.

She inspected the wound for a minute, wiping the small amounts of blood that were now oozing into her white school shirt. Her eyes narrowed and she glared at him, her lips twisting into a growl. Without warning, she ran at him and aimed her spear directly at his shoulder – to which Draco raised his own spear up in defense.

At the last minute before impact, she smirked and shifted her spear downwards right at his stomach but unfortunately for the Slytherin, he didn't have enough time to redirect his defense and as soon as her spear had scraped a similar shallow wound through his shirt just above his stomach, Draco sighed and stepped back, wiping at the wound.

He shook his head again as if to admonish her before he finally surged at her, lunging at her from every direction. She gasped and evaded his moves one by one, their spears clanging loudly against each other once again as they twisted and fought their way around the room – caught up in an inborn rhythm of skilled evasion and attacks.

Running towards the rows of swords along the walls, Harry reached for a particular sharp spear. She whirled around and hurled it right at him, its sharp edge slicing perfectly through the air in a path that aimed right for his left shoulder.

Eyes wide, Draco hurled himself backwards in a high back flip, his shirt lifting slightly and exposing the muscles along his toned stomach. The sharp spear was mere inches from the skin of his abdomen as it flew past him through the maneuver, stabbing noisily against the wall behind him. He stared at it for a shocked moment before turning around and staring wordlessly at Harry.

She smiled at him, her eyes were full of challenge and he met this with an amused smirk, walking several steps up to her until they were only a couple of feet away. After a long silence of the two of them attempting to stare each other down, it was Draco who finally broke first and he lunged at her, raising his spear and bringing it crashing down her body.

Crying out in surprise, she raised her own weapon and smashed it violently against his, causing both of them to step back in surprise when their spears flew out of their hands at the powerful impact and landed several feet away from both of them on the floor.

Their shoulders heaving with exhaustion, they stared at each other in dismay for a couple of seconds, their eyes darting back and forth between the other and their discarded weapons. Jaimee blinked and spied her forgotten wand a couple of feet away from them – Draco's wand close beside it.

His eyes narrowed in suspicion briefly and he followed her gaze, sneering in satisfaction when he caught sight of his wand. Then – as though they had heard each other's thoughts – they both snapped into action at the same time and dived down, their bodies crashing painfully and shoving against each other as they fought to reach their wand first.

Harry managed to grab hers but before she could raise it up for a spell, Draco tackled her to the floor – their forms falling onto the hard surface in a tangle of messy limbs. She gasped and wrestled wildly against him, their arms and legs intertwined.

His eyes widened when she managed to point her wand at his face and he grabbed her hands, forcing them to point away from him and upwards towards the far corner of the room. She growled and cursed

against his strength, shoving against his hands and attempting to point the tip of her wand back at him while at the same time, preventing his other hand from reaching his wand a couple of inches away from her head.

Draco gave a grunt of exertion and repositioned himself so that he was straddling her, keeping her kicking legs down. Before she managed to point the tip of her wand at him again, he sneered and leaned down, their lips meeting in a fiery, passionate kiss that matched the sheer aggressiveness of their physical struggle.

His lips muffled her angry screams of protest and he used her ire as a distraction as he reached his hand toward his wand again, his fingers barely touching the thin, wooden handle. As soon as his fingers wrapped around it, he swished it through the air and initiated a spell – causing a flurry of sharp air to suddenly begin wrapping around her like a small tornado.

She managed to tear her mouth away from his to scream in shock as she felt herself being lifted off the ground, her body enveloped within the tornado's center and propelled upwards until her feet lay suspended and dangling in mid-air.

Hoisting himself up on his feet, Draco looked up at her ascending form and watched with a self-satisfied smirk as the tornado held her helpless, unable to get back to the ground nor break away from the sharp motion of air surrounding her.

Pointing his wand at her, he smirked again and twirled his wand around in his hand, causing her to scream in surprise again when the tornado flipped over and she was hanging upside down, the strands of her hair hanging from her head.

"Malfoy! When I get down from here, I'm going to kill you!" She raged at him, racking her brain for a counter spell to free herself. Chuckling, he leaned one shoulder against the wall and crossed his arms, shaking his head in amusement.

"Concede, Potter...Make this easier for both of us." He ordered lazily, his lips twisted in a wry grin as he watched her struggling with all

sorts of spells in an attempt to break the perfect tornado prison he had made for her.

“Silitectio!”

Draco’s eyes widened in reluctant admiration as the tornado he had formed suddenly began hardening into solid rock around her like a hollow covering, cracking and crumbling noisily as bits and pieces of bit began to fall to the ground.

When it had finished forming and began crashing heavily back down, Harry pointed her wand at herself and initiated a levitation spell as it slipped past her, shattering upon impact on the ground’s solid surface.

“Shit!” Draco hastily waved his wand over himself, casting a protective shield as the giant rock shattered noisily a few feet in front of him, several large pieces darting out dangerously toward his face and body.

As soon as the rubble and smoke cleared, Jaimee narrowed her eyes and slowly lowered herself back down to the ground, raising her ignited wand to look through the cloud of dust.

She didn’t get far, however, as a sharp rope wrapped tightly around her ankles and yanked backwards, causing her to lose her balance and gasp, falling clumsily onto the floor. Her left knee collided painfully against a sharp, stray rock and she cried out loudly in pain when she felt the skin rip, causing the Slytherin behind her to suddenly stop in concern.

“I’m sorry, are you okay—”

“Don’t you dare stop now, Malfoy! I don’t want you feeling sorry for me!” She screamed angrily at him, shoving herself back up and ignoring the screaming pain in her bleeding knee. She transfigured her wand into a sharp knife and began slicing through the rope around her ankles.

Whirling around to face him, she glared angrily at him through narrowed eyes and watched the uncertainty flicker in his handsome

face. “I want you to fight me for everything you’ve got! Do you understand me?! This isn’t a game to me, Draco! I need this! I need—to—” Her scream cracked as her voice shook with emotions and she turned around, hiding the burning sensation at the corners of her eyes.

I need a reason for myself to marry you even if you don’t love me! Please! I want to be with you – even if I’m not a real woman! Please! She thought to herself, her vision blurring rapidly as she desperately tried to move away from him as far as she could.

Draco didn’t seem to understand what she meant and he took several steps forward her, his wand lowering and his eyes clouding in confusion.

“Harry, look at me...I’ll stop fighting if you want me to. I don’t want to hurt you—”

“STOP IT! JUST STOP IT!” She screamed at him, snapping viciously and shoving him away with impressive force, causing the Slytherin to stumble backwards onto the ground.

He blinked up at her trembling form in shock, watching as she hastily wiped her eyes on the back of her hand before stepping backwards and raising her wand up, pointing it at one of the nearby torches lined up against the wall.

Her face darkened into an eerie determination and the next words that spilled out of her mouth were something Draco could hardly understand although he was sure that it was in another language – Parseltongue, to be precise.

“Inardesssscusssserpensssss...”

“What...the...” The words eventually died from Draco’s lips as he looked up, his eyes widening in horror as he watched a gigantic fire serpent growing right out of one of the small torches in front of him, its mighty head flicking out a long sharp tongue of flames that seemed to hover near him.



He raised his wand and cast a protective shield around himself, wincing when the serpent began slithering along the ceiling toward him, its long body igniting the entire room on fire and its tail knocking back several torches onto the ground, causing the floor to erupt into flames as well.

Harry had levitated herself off the ground and now stood in mid-air in the very center of the room, her eyes blazing with anger. Parseltongue continued to be issued from her lips – obviously ordering the fire serpent around its path of destruction and Draco could only run through the mess of obstacles and flames around the room to avoid it, racking his mind for something to put both the flames and Harry's anger out.

"Harry! You have to listen to me! I want to tell you something! Something I should have told you two nights ago when—"

"YOU DON'T KNOW HOW I FEEL AT ALL, DRACO! I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT I AM ANYMORE! I'M NOT A BOY! I'M NOT A REAL GIRL EITHER! I DON'T KNOW WHO I AM! I'M SO FUCKING CONFUSED ABOUT HOW I FEEL ABOUT EVERYTHING! ABOUT ME! MORE SO ABOUT YOU!" She screamed and the fire serpent hissed loudly behind Draco, its tongue looming dangerously close.

"Hydraconus Avolo!" He shouted, pointing his wand directly at the snake's head and ducking in time to avoid its sharp lunge towards his face. A thin stream of clear blue water began pouring from his wand and it seemed to float up into the air, merging delicately into the form of the small, beautiful winged dragon.

It gave a loud battle cry, flapping its wings and spraying the burning room with droplets of water before it flew directly towards the gigantic head of the fire snake, spraying the serpent with the water that spurted from its open mouth.

The fire serpent hissed angrily and curled itself around the dragon, attempting to squeeze it to death but the minute its body wrapped around the dragon's tiny frame, its flames slowly began to extinguish – overwhelmed by the power of water.

Draco watched with bated breath, his back leaning against the wall in exhaustion as the fire serpent gave out last hiss of defeat before it vanished, drowned out by the powerful streams of water spurting from the smaller dragon.

Pointing his wand at it again, he slowly guided the dragon around the room in silence – extinguishing the flames and putting out the fire until the entire room lay in blackened soot. When all the flames had gone, Draco flicked his wand and the dragon gave one last roar before dissolving into a puddle of water that trickled back onto the floor.

Looking back up at the distraught Gryffindor – he watched cautiously as she continued to glare at him with a burning anger in her eyes, her form visibly shaking.

“Harry...” He began, raising up his wand to her level of sight before purposely lowering it and placing it back in his pocket – showing her he meant her no more harm. She watched him with narrowed eyes, her cheeks flushed with uncertainty.

“I want to talk...Can you please come back down—”

“I LOVE YOU, DAMMIT! ARE YOU HAPPY?! YOU’VE TURNED ME INTO A WOMAN AND MADE ME FEEL THIS WAY! IF YOU’RE JUST LEADING ME ON AND PLAYING WITH ME—”

“I feel the same way about you, Harry.”

The scream dissolved into silence and she stared blankly at him for three whole minutes, eyes wide, cheeks flushed and jaw hanging open as her mind desperately tried to process and comprehend the three spoken words that had issued from his lips in a soft, soothing whisper.

“Wha—What?”

She sputtered weakly as her feet slowly began descending back down unconsciously, the wand in her hand dropping limply to the floor the minute her feet had touched the ground. Her knees seemed to

shake in nervousness and she steadied herself carefully, looking back up and staring dumbly at the genuine, tender smile he was giving her from several feet away.

“I feel the same way you feel...Perhaps even more.”

Draco smiled wider at the expression on her face and he took a single step toward her, loving the growing blush on her cheeks and the way her jaw seemed to be trembling as she tried to form together any coherent sentence to voice her thoughts.

“D—Draco...I—”

“I love everything about you! Everything you are and everything you’re not. The way you wrinkle your nose when you’re embarrassed...The way you melt in my arms...The fact that you are probably the most ungraceful – and the most ignorant – woman I have ever met...” He trailed off, pausing when a choked-up laugh escaped her lips and she swallowed the lump in her throat, unable to say anything.

He paused for a moment, watching as she struggled to control herself – no doubt fighting heavily against the female inclinations within her that were threatening to break the dam of emotions he knew she was trying to hold off.

Shaking his head, he gestured around them to the destroyed room of requirement, laughing lightly under his breath. “I love the fact that you fight against everyone for the things you believe are right...I love your simplicity...Your selflessness, kindness and fairness to everyone... I love the way you make me laugh and the way you make a complete fool out of yourself to do it...” He continued, meeting her eyes and noting the glimmer of mirth and embarrassment he saw in them.

Finally, he stepped forward and cupped her cheek, a warm feeling of affection welling up in his chest when she closed her eyes and placed her own hand over his, her fingers gently caressing his in silent understanding.

“Most of all...I love that you’re...You’re you, Harry. You always were...Even if you don’t realize it..” He whispered, wiping away with a single finger the stray tear that had finally managed to escape her holds and roll down her cheek.

“If you’ll let me...I want to spend the rest of my life reminding you of the beautiful person you are...I want to marry you and make sure you never forget who you really are again.” He finished, leaning forward and pressing his lips very softly against hers, causing her heart to skip a beat in anticipation.

Unlike the kisses they had shared before, this kiss was different – gentle, sweet and tender – as though he was afraid she would break if he kissed her too hard. It was a welcome change, however, and she wrapped her shaking arms around his neck, hesitantly pulling herself closer against his body.

When he had pulled back, both their cheeks were heavily flushed and Harry finally managed to blink herself out of her stunned, mental stupor. She found the voice to speak, her eyes still wide and seemingly blank yet tinged with a mixture of shock, disbelief and aching happiness all at once.

“D—Draco...”

“I will make you mine tonight, Harry...I will marry you. Which is why I know you’ll forgive me for doing what I am about to do right now...” He spoke firmly and his words had barely registered in her head before she was shoved backwards away from him, her body crashing against the floor.

She had just raised her head and stared blankly up at him in obvious confusion when he yanked out his wand and pointed it directly at her, a grim and determined gleam in his silver eyes.

“Propello!”

Harry was too stunned from his confession to avoid his attack and she was thrown violently backwards, crashing noisily through and destroying the rack of weapons and shields in the far corner of the

room. Her back collided harshly with the stone wall and she winced in pain, collapsing back onto the floor where she was eventually buried under a pile of heavy swords, shields and spears.

She would have screamed in either shock or excruciating pain at the unexpected attack but her thoughts were still on his previous words and she continued to mull them over and over again in her head, her stomach fluttering nervously each time she repeated his words to herself.

He...m-must love me...He...loves...me...? That was the only thing that seemed capable of entering her mind at that specific moment and she barely registered the fact that Draco was now kneeling down beside her, checking on her in concern and digging her out from under the pile of heavy weapons and shields that lay on top of her.

Draco looked worried as he inspected her bruised and cut skin, her body laid out unmoving on the ground and her eyes unfocused, staring unblinkingly up at the ceiling with a void, blank expression in their depths.

“Harry...?”

She didn't seem to hear him as she continued to stare off into non-existence, a slow warmth of happiness slowly erupting from her chest and spreading right to her fingers. The pain in her body was more than negligible now and she found that she couldn't even feel her wounds anymore, her eyes slowly blinking and traveling upwards to gaze right up into Draco's handsome, worried face.

“Please concede... It's over...There's no more need to fight.” Draco spoke softly yet firmly, carefully helping her up into a sitting position and supporting her with his arms.

Though she heard him, she paid no attention to his words and looked him directly in the eyes instead. She sat up carefully, her arms going to hug her knees and her back leaning against his arms. Finally – after what seemed like hours – she spoke, her voice surprisingly steady and controlled.

“Everything you said, Draco...Do you...Do you mean it?”

He met her gaze easily, their eyes piercing right into each other as though they were trying to read the thoughts hidden behind the glassy orbs. Then, smirking in amusement, he shook his head as though to admonish her and answered her in his classic lazy Malfoy drawl, finally bringing a beautiful smile to the Gryffindor's face.

“Are you really that daft, Pot-head? What else did you think all the crap I've been doing lately was about?! Shall I spell it out for you?” He mocked loudly and despite the sarcasm in his voice, Harry broke out into a tearful smile.

Shaking her head at his ignorance, she muffled a choked up laugh and punched his arm, causing him to raise an eyebrow in query. “You're the daft idiot, Malfoy!” She snapped weakly at him, wiping hastily at her eyes before more tears spilled out.

“You're so stupid!” She raged again, aiming another light punch – this time to his chest. Draco opened his mouth to blurt out another sarcastic retort when she spoke again, her voice coming out in a barely audible, shaky whisper.

“You stupid git...All you really had to do was say all that, Draco...And I'd be yours...”

Draco couldn't think of anything to say. In fact, he couldn't even think at all. All he could do was feel a squeezing, aching emotion erupting in his chest as he stared into her beautiful face, mesmerized by the courage and love he saw in those bright green eyes.

All she wanted me to say all along...All she wanted was...I c—can't say it...H—How...?

Swallowing the lump in his throat, he continued to stare dumbly at her like a mindless fool before he finally found his voice and uttered the only thing that came into his head – the only words he could say.

“Please be mine...”

He waited with bated breath, his heart wringing painfully in nervousness but it immediately leaped into his throat for joy when he saw the beautiful smile on her face, her eyes glowing brighter than he had ever seen them before.

She reached up and cupped his cheek, caressing the soft skin and smiling again when he closed his eyes and savored the feeling of her soft fingers on his face. Finally, she answered him and her softly spoken words seemed to echo clearly and delightfully in his ears.

“I concede...”

\*RATED SCENE DELETED\*

“I love you... I LOVE YOU!”

As soon as the words had left his lips, he collapsed weakly and emptied himself inside her, his chest heaving in exhaustion and his entire form drenched in sweat and blood from their fight.

Her body seemed to be in a similar state and she pushed weakly at him, indicating that he was too heavy for her. Rolling them over so that she was on top of him, Draco lay there completely motionless, his face red in embarrassment over his confession. Before he could shut his eyes, he heard her speak – her voice heavily fused with love and affection.

“I love you too...Silly git...”

Looking up at her, he was surprised to see her smiling down at him, reaching up to brush away the sweaty locks of hair that were pressed against his forehead. When he couldn't bring himself to say anything, she shook her head at gave him a pointed glare.

“There...Was that so hard to say...?” She teased lightly, watching as the awkwardness on his face melted and he finally smiled back, his eyes softening at her words.

“No...I guess not...I’ve just never said that...to anyone...before...” He admitted in a disbelieving whisper, his eyes looking directly into hers with an overwhelming tenderness that made her blush hotly under his gaze. Instead, she laughed weakly to hide her embarrassment and spoke again, gesturing to the pile of swords and spears scattered around them.

“I never thought I’d ever have sex on a cold floor surrounded by a mess of weapons...” She mused out loud, causing Draco to laugh weakly in spite of his exhaustion.

“Hey you were the one who attacked me, Potter...You’re such a tempting wildcat...” He mused loudly and at his words, a faint blush rose to her cheeks but she brushed it off with a laugh, shaking her head at her embarrassment.

“I’m a girl with the sex drive of a male, Malfoy...You must have known the dangers of that when you decided to pursue me.” She teased back and this time, Draco really did laugh out loud in amusement, leaning forward and giving her an affectionate kiss on her scar.

“Trust me...That will not be a problem...” He drawled, smirking contentedly to himself and enjoying the blush that was now on Harry’s cheek as she pressed herself tighter against him, inadvertently brushing against the wound on his stomach and making him flinch in pain.

“I’m sorry...” She rushed out, pulling herself up and looking down at the bloody wound that she had inflicted at the beginning of the fight. Smirking and shaking his head at her concern, he waved the matter away and slowly picked up his wand, conjuring up a pair of rich white robes for the both of them.

He handed one to her before he pushed her gently away from him and stood up, holding a hand out to her to help her back up to her feet. As soon as they had both shrugged themselves into the thin robes, he turned and began walking towards the far corner of the room, causing her eyebrows to scrunch up in confusion.

“Draco...?”



He didn't answer her and she watched in mild curiosity, tugging her robes tighter around her naked body as Draco leaned down and grabbed his bag from the floor, rifling through its contents before he pulled out a small, blue velvet box.

Again, he rifled through the large bag and pulled out another box, tucking it carefully under his arm. This one much larger – about as wide as her foot – and her eyebrows shot up again as he began walking toward her with both boxes, a mischievous smile on his face.

He gestured for her to sit back down on the floor and she obliged, watching as he sat down beside her and carefully set the large box in front of them, placing the smaller velvet box right beside it. Before she could ask him what was going on, he finally spoke, gesturing to the larger box in front of them.

“What—”

“I have two things I want to give you today, Harry...But I would prefer it if you actually opened the bigger box first...There's something I would like you to see.” He began, looking uncertainly at her and gauging her reaction

She nodded and slowly reached out towards the large present, ripping slowly through the elegant white wrapper and opening the box inside until she had pulled out a beautiful antique mirror slightly larger than her head. The ornate material from which it was made from was obviously pure silver and it looked like it had been preserved well, the carved patterns adorning it elegantly beautiful and exquisitely made.

Turning around to thank him, Draco held up a hand indicating for her to keep quiet before he took the mirror in his hands and turned it over to the reflective surface, using one of the discarded pieces of the wrapper to cover their reflection.

Noticing her heightened confusion and frustration, he laughed and pointed to the inscription on the very top of the mirror – allowing her to read the single word out loud.

“Veritas...”

Truth...She thought, nodding in understanding before she looked questioningly at him, waiting for him to explain further.

Instead of explaining, however, Draco seemed to have other ideas and he finally pulled the wrapper he was using to cover the mirror's reflective surface and raised it up to her face, allowing her to peer closely into her reflection.

Taking the hint, she blinked and peered into the mirror, meeting her own green eyes and confused scowl. For a minute, she seemed to stare at her feminine features – her mussed up hair, her red lips, her elegant eyebrows and even the ugly scar on her forehead.

“Draco, what exactly is this about? I know I look terrible right now, do you have to point that—”

Her words died on her lips as her reflection soon faded and she found herself staring into the equally shocked yet familiar face of Harry James Potter – her very own reflection when she had been a male. She looked exactly as she remembered she did – the unkempt, messy black hair, the same bright green, mischievous eyes and as she smiled, her boy reflection mirrored the action, the corners of his lips quirking upwards into a familiar, boyish grin.

She felt her heart pounding hard against her chest as she took the mirror from Draco's hands and peered closer into it, oblivious to the way the blonde was watching her reactions carefully with an unreadable look on his face.

“Merlin...I—It's...I—I'm...” She broke herself off and hesitantly raised a hand to her hair, watching with wide, tearful eyes as her male reflection mirrored her actions perfectly and ran a hand through his unruly locks.

Her eyes dimmed in disappointment, however, when what she felt was not short, unruly hair but long soft locks of black hair that flowed down to her waist. Giving her reflection one last sad look, she finally set the mirror down and shook her head at her own naiveté.

“It’s just a reflection...It isn’t real. I’m still a girl...” She whispered softly, sighing and turning away but Draco reached a hand out and gently turned her face to meet his solemn gaze. “It’s an enchanted mirror that shows nothing but the truth about a person, Harry...It’s real...Who you see in there is you.” He said softly, picking the mirror back up and holding it back against her face.

She looked slightly uncertain at his words and to reassure her, he moved closer so that they were both able to look into the mirror – gazing intently into their own reflections. As she watched Draco’s reflection appear behind the reflection of her male self, her eyes widened at the perfect picture they still seemed to make.

Reading her thoughts, Draco smiled at the two reflections and leaned forward to place a kiss on her neck, causing Jaimee’s eyes to widen even more when their reflections mimicked their actions perfectly again and she watched Draco’s reflection placing a kiss on her male reflection’s shoulder.

Seeing her shock and the blush on her cheek, Draco chuckled lightly and used his free hand to caress her face, keeping his eyes glued intently to their reflections in the mirror and watching as they imitated their actions perfectly – even the embarrassed blush on Jaimee’s face.

“Draco, I feel a little awkward...I—”

“I just want you to understand, Harry...” He whispered again and this time, he turned to face her, gently gripping her chin and forcing her face up to meet his eyes. When she winced in embarrassment, he shook his head and continued to speak.

“This mirror shows you nothing but the truth about who you are...It’s what I’ve been saying all along. If a person under any glamour charm, Polyjuice potion or whatever magical transformation looked into this, they would see their real self! Nothing’s changed...You’re Harry Potter! Whatever biological gender you take, you will always be Harry. Do you understand now...?” He explained gently, watching as emotions began surging in and out of Jaimee’s face.

When she seemed incapable of saying anything, he spoke for her, redirecting her attention to his voice. "I want you to see more than anything that you're still you...It doesn't matter whether you're wearing a damn skirt or pants...None of that matters...You have nothing to be scared of." He finished and before he could say anything else, she wrapped her arms around him and buried her face into his chest.

Draco set the mirror down briefly and wrapped his arms around her waist, pulling her close against him and stroking her hair gently with his fingers. She seemed to be holding in another dam of emotions and his suspicions were confirmed when she spoke up in a shaky voice, her voice sounding restrained with tears.

"D—Damn female progesterone...Making me cry so much like I'm a weepy little wimp." She kidded weakly, her voice sounding muffled against his chest.

He smirked at this and answered her with a superior scoff, shaking his head at her comment. "Actually, it's estrogen which causes women to cry so much, Potter...Progesterone is mainly used for regulating the female reproductive system. Tsk." He corrected her smugly, causing Jaimee to blink in shock and stiffen in ire.

"Shut up, Malfoy."

Chuckling, he pulled back and smiled at the irritated scowl she was giving him despite the obvious tears in her eyes. He brushed the tears away from her cheeks before speaking again, holding the mirror up in his hand and turning it toward them so that they were able to see their reflections once more.

"Keep your eyes on our reflections, Harry..."

When she obliged and turned to the mirror, Draco leaned forward and pressed his lips firmly against hers, his free hand slipping behind her neck and pulling her closer against him. As he said, she kept her eyes opened and watched with rapt fascination as their two

reflections – her male self and Draco – mimicked their actions in perfect synch.

Draco's eyes were open as well and as he kissed her, he kept his gaze on their reflections, his eyes completely mesmerized by the erotic and beautiful scene he saw. After several minutes of this, Jaimee finally reached up and took the mirror from him, surprising him by carefully setting it back face down onto the floor.

As she wrapped both her hands around his neck and pulled him in for a deeper kiss, he shot her a brief look of query. She answered him with a small, reassuring smile. "That's just a reflection, Draco...This is me now...And I want you to look at me while we kiss. After all, I'm Harry too you know." She told him, finally smiling as she understood completely what he had meant for her to realize.

He gave her another rare smile, making her blush and unknowingly causing her heart to skip a beat. Raising her hand up to his lips to give her fingers a kiss, he chuckled and spoke again – drawing her attention to the velvet box he still held in his other hand.

"Yes you are...Which is why I am now going to ask you a very important question...Something I should have been able to ask from the very beginning..." He started and with that, he slowly raised the velvet box up to her face, and flicked it open causing her eyes to widen comically at the sight of the gigantic diamond ring that lay nested inside.

"U—Uh...Draco, what—"

"Harry...Jaimee...Will you marry me?"

It took a couple of seconds of her blinking, gaping and sputtering stupidly at the diamond ring he was holding up to her face before she finally noticed the way he was biting his lip in uncharacteristic nervousness, his eyes wide with anticipation as he waited for her answer.

Finally, she giggled at his growing agitation and threw her arms around the neck of her favorite Slytherin, pulling him into a tight embrace that she didn't intend to let go for a long time.

"YES, YES, YES! A THOUSAND TIMES YES! YOU MELODRAMATIC PRAT!"

A pleased smile was on Lucius face as he looked up from his son's letter and met the curious eyes of his wife. Across the large dining table, Narcissa was blinking impatiently at him while beside her; Lawrence Malfoy was smirking at the obvious satisfaction he could sense from his son's face.

"Well, Lucius? What did my son wish to say...?"

Chuckling, he passed his father the letter while turning back to give his wife a reassuring smirk. "Cissa...Are you willing to make the necessary arrangements for another grand Malfoy engagement party?" He asked idly, watching the blue in Narcissa's eyes light up in elation.

"Y-You mean...?"

"Yes. I believe a celebration is in order soon."

A/N: A little on the fluffy side but some of you requested things get a bit more sweet and loving between our two protagonists so I figured I'd add a couple of mush factors in. :wink: I hope you all liked how this turned out. Again, for the deleted scene, the link to it is in my profile page. The next chapter will be mostly reactions of everyone about their engagement while the engagement party will most likely come in the chapter after that so keep a lookout! :wink:

AS ALWAYS, DON'T FORGET TO LEAVE ME YOUR WONDERFUL REVIEWS AND COMMENTS!

## Chapter 26 – Girl Stuff

“Harry?! Are you done yet? We’re going to be late!”

“Piss off! Stop rushing me!”

Draco sighed and checked his watch for the tenth time that morning from where he sat on one of the lush couches in his dorm room. Drumming his fingers impatiently on the table, he held back a growl when he heard Harry’s muffled complaints from behind the bathroom where she was changing, checking his watch once more and noting that they had less than five minutes to get to breakfast.

“I’ll be right out! God, your bathroom is too damn clean that I can barely find where everything is!” She growled loudly, causing Draco’s left eye to twitch in irritation at the very idea of her disorganizing everything.

“Yeah well you’d better not make a mess in there, Potter or you’re going to spend the entire morning cleaning everything up!” He growled back, running a hand impatiently through his hair. It was after a couple more minutes that the bathroom door finally slid open and he turned around, ready to snap at the Gryffindor for taking so long.

As soon as he saw her, however, his jaw dropped open. He stared – wide-eyed and gaping – at the awkwardly blushing, beautiful girl that stood before him. Harry was biting her lip as she waited for his reaction, watching the awe and desire glowing in his eyes.

“I—I thought I’d try something different today for a change...H—How do I look...?” She asked nervously, her hands twisted behind her back and her eyes focused shyly on her feet. Draco didn’t answer as he stood up and walked over to her, his eyes roaming up and down her form.

For the first time since the season started, Jaimee looked like...like a girl...Draco thought, his eyes glazing over in admiration as he inspected her appearance. Instead of her usual attire of wearing male slacks, she was wearing a short, red and gold pleated skirt that

ended several inches above her knees and showed off her long, gorgeous legs.

Allowing his eyes to trail upwards, Draco noticed with a smirk that the bandages that bound her chest together were gone and this was confirmed further when his eyes dropped and he noticed that her large, oversized male school shirt had been replaced with a snug-fitting school blouse – its top two buttons left unbuttoned to provide a generous view of her tempting cleavage.

Her tie hung cutely from her neck and he followed this upwards until he eventually reached her face. He was surprised further when he noticed that instead of tying her hair back or wearing it up as she usually did these days, it looked like she had actually brushed it and let it cascade elegantly and very femininely down her shoulders, the dark tresses framing her face perfectly and contrasting well with the pale skin of her rose-tinted cheeks.

Finally, he let his eyes rest on the beautiful diamond ring that now sat prettily on her finger and he felt a surge of pride welling up in his chest, knowing full well that the beautiful creature in front of him was finally his and his alone.

Mine...Draco thought unconsciously, a genuine smile gracing his handsome face as he took several steps toward her, raising a hand and playfully running his fingers through her hair.

“Well, well...Potter, is that you...? If I didn’t know any better, I’d say you look like a girl...What happened?” He teased, smiling when she blushed again and she shifted uncomfortably on her feet, purposely avoiding his eyes.

“Y—You don’t like it? Do you think I look stupid? I didn’t have an extra girl’s uniform with me so I transfigured mine into one...Do I look completely ridiculous?” She asked self-consciously, suddenly feeling embarrassed under his scrutinizing look.

Draco shook his head and gave her a reassuring grin, wrapping his arms around the curve of her waist and pulling her close against him until their foreheads were pressing against each other. “You look



gorgeous. A girl...but gorgeous...But...What brought this on all of a sudden?" He asked curiously, pulling away and meeting her warm eyes.

Harry laughed and blushed again, shifting her weight from one foot to the other. "W—Well...I thought about what you said last night...About how I shouldn't try so hard to be myself...And about how it doesn't matter whether I'm wearing a skirt or pants..." She began uncertainly, looking up and waiting until Draco nodded for her to continue.

"And I figured...I wasn't really accomplishing anything with my cross-dressing...I suppose...I was just so scared of losing my identity...But..." She stopped and finally looked up at him, meeting his warm gaze with a beautiful smile.

"It's pointless to pretend to be a boy when I'm not... I am a girl now...But at the same time, I am still Harry...It isn't one way or the other and I finally understand that...Thank you, Draco...You helped me find myself." She finished, wrapping her hands around his neck and pressing her lips briefly against his in a sweet, affectionate kiss.

When she pulled back, Draco looked a bit dazed and she laughed lightly, shaking her head at his reaction. "So...No more bouts of denial? No more identity crisis or sexual confusion? Well I have to say that makes you a bit boring now, Potter..." Draco mused, giving her a fond, teasing smirk which she easily returned.

"Well... Let's just say I'm giving you the responsibility of being man enough in this relationship for both of us from now on...And boring?" She scoffed, looking amused at his words.

"If you think I'm going to be your perfect, pristine girl, Draco... You've got another thing coming." She pointed out and with that, she pointed to her feet and he finally noticed the scruffy and worn-down dirt-stained sneakers that clashed horribly with her skirt.

"No matter what happens, nothing on earth is making me wear anything with heels again."

Draco blinked once, watching in shock as she winked at him, reaching one hand and coyly plucking his Head Boy badge right off his robes and pinning it to her own. Then, giving him a flirtatious smile, she tossed her long hair in a purposely exaggerated feminine manner over her shoulder and stalked out of room, leaving the Slytherin gaping after her.

He stared at the closed entrance door of his dormitory in silence for a long moment before he finally shook his head and burst out into amused, heartfelt laughter, his shoulders shaking in mirth as he hurriedly walked out of the room after her.

“Potter, you git! Come back here and give me back my badge!”

“...You really think she’s okay...?”

“For the last time, Hermione! This is Harry we are talking about! I’m sure she’s fine!” Ron admonished in exasperation, sighing and shaking his head at her persistent questions as she continued to crane her head around the Great Hall in search of their best friend during breakfast that morning from the end of the Gryffindor table.

More and more groups of sleepy students poured into the Hall and headed for their respecting tables – nearly each one carrying a thick set of books and quills for their upcoming exams that morning. Beside the Head Girl, Blaise Zabini was smirking at their concern and was happily ignoring the stares he was receiving from the other Gryffindors at the table, eating his breakfast in silence.

“Well you said wasn’t in bed all night! And that’s bad too considering Snape’s practical Potions exam is this afternoon! I doubt she had any chance to study for it!” Hermione thought out loud, her eyebrows fused together in worry as she looked intently at the Great Hall entrance.

Her eyes widened briefly at the sight of a slim, black-haired girl but she sighed when she realized that it wasn’t Harry, shaking her head and turning to face Blaise’s helplessly amused grin. “Relax

Granger...I'm sure Potter's fine. Draco wouldn't hurt her...too much..." He added as an afterthought, a horde of dirty images entering his mind and making him chuckle.

As though hearing his thoughts, Hermione gave a disapproving screech and slapped him hard across his cheek, causing him to growl in indignation. "What was that for?! You're the one thinking dirty, not me!" He snapped, turning to glare at her as he rubbed his sore cheek.

Hermione gave another indignant humph and turned away from him, avoiding Ron's bemused gaze. "Remember you're at the Gryffindor table this morning so you have to behave yourself. You're not in Slytherin territory anymore." She huffed, causing Blaise to roll his eyes and groan as more Gryffindors took the seat beside him.

"Don't remind me...I can already feel my 'hot and devilishly sexy' image dropping several notches because I'm sitting at the goody-goody table. How degrading." He mumbled, this time causing Ron to growl and give him a look that would have sent anyone else running.

"Hey watch your mouth, Zabini...Don't think that just because you and Hermione are 'trial-dating' or whatever the bloody hell you call it means that I won't punch you senseless!" He threatened, causing Hermione to wince at their dispute and Blaise to scoff in derision.

"I'd like to see you try, Weasel."

"What did you just call me, you stupid slimy git?!"

"I called you a Weasel, you pathetic Gryffindork—"

"Is that Harry?!" Hermione suddenly exclaimed, interrupting Ron and Blaise's argument as she stared in surprise at the beautiful black-haired girl Gryffindor that just entered the room. As if on key, about a dozen male eyes had redirected their attention to the girl in question and most of them widened dramatically at the change, the expression in them imitating the shock on Hermione's face.

"Bloody hell...S—She looks like a girl!" Ron gasped out, his eyes moving from Jaimee's short, pleated skirt all the way up her female

curves to her long hair. Blaise had a similar look on his face though his eyes lingered a bit too long on Jaimee's legs for Hermione's liking and she glared at him, causing him to wince and offer her a sheepish smile.

Before she could scold him for checking out her best friend, her eyes fell on Harry again and seeing the other girl wave nervously at her, she finally smiled and waved back – her suspicions confirmed. "It is Harry! She's finally stopped her ridiculous cross-dressing nonsense and came to her senses!" She rushed out, jumping up from her seat in relief when she saw the other girl walking slowly toward them, a faint blush on her cheeks.

Eager to escape from Ron and Blaise's senseless bickering and wanting to praise her best friend on her feminine appearance, Hermione rushed from their table and ran toward her, making the other girl jump in surprise when she had thrown her arms around her in a tight hug.

"Harry! You look beautiful and more importantly, you look like a girl! How are you feeling? How did everything go? Are you—"

Hermione's voice ended in a pathetic squeak of surprise when her eyes had fallen on the other hand that was wrapped around Jaimee's slender waist and following up the pale limb, she found herself gaping into the bored, sneering face of one very handsome Draco Malfoy.

Seeing the other Head Student gaping stupidly at them, the boredom on his face gave way to smug amusement and he smirked at her, ignoring Harry's admonishing glare. "Granger, I would appreciate it if you take your hands off my fiancé and close your mouth. It isn't polite for a debutante to gape like that." He drawled and at his words, Hermione instantly pulled away and her mouth snapped shut, her cheeks flushing in embarrassment.

"I—I...U—Uh—"

"Well...Ehehe...Hermione, I guess that answers your question, huh?" Jaimee awkwardly blurted out, her voice sounding forced as she tried to gauge the reactions on the other girl's face. The brunette nodded

wordlessly, her eyes still wide as her gaze flickered back and forth between Jaimee's pink cheeks and the beautiful diamond ring on her finger.

"YOU LOST TO MALFOY?! YOU'RE ENGAGED?! AND WHY ARE YOU WEARING A SKIRT?!"

Both Harry and Hermione cringed at the sound of Ron's screeching voice. The redhead ran across the room towards them, his face flushed not with embarrassment but with disbelief and anger. Harry took a deep breath before she answered, looking at Ron with a calming smile.

"I am wearing a skirt because I am a girl, Ron. I finally accept that now and I would appreciate it if—"

"I can't believe you, Harry! I thought you hated the prat, he's the reason you're in this body! I mean – not that it isn't a very nice body – B—BUT THAT'S BESIDE THE POINT!" He hastily rushed out, purposely interrupting her and failing to see Harry's narrowed, twitching eyes at his rather lewd comment.

"Ron—"

"He's the reason you're a girl and you're just going to let him marry you like that?! Th—That's...Well...It's MALFOY!" He sputtered incoherently, interrupting her again and causing Harry to sigh even louder and bury her face in her hands as more and more students had stopped and were now watching them in interest.

Draco, however, seemed to be enjoying Ron's little tirade and smirked, pulling Harry closer against him, his hand resting possessively on the curve of her waist. "Yes, it is a nice body, isn't it? For once, we seem to agree on something, Weasel...Although I must say that if you ever stare at it or make a comment about it again, I will have you fed to a Hungarian Horntail." He threatened, his eyes narrowing dangerously with anger.

Ron's jaw clenched and he raised his chin, stepping closer to the blonde Slytherin until they were meeting each other's icy glares.

“Stop calling methat, ferret-face! You call me that one more time and I’ll—”

“Congratulations, Drac...You finally got her. Your parents will be thrilled. To be honest, I didn’t actually think you could do it – you look bloody great, by the way, Potter! You should dress appropriately for your gender more often.” Blaise chimed in a deadpan voice as he stepped between them, purposely placing himself between the two angry men before they started a fight.

Choosing to ignore his remark about her clothes, Jaimee flashed him a weak smile of gratitude as Draco was successfully distracted, turning to give the other Slytherin a self-satisfied smile. “I’m disappointed that you would think so low of me, Zabini...You know I always get what I want.” He commented arrogantly, causing Harry to give him a glare.

Ron turned a pale face to Harry and snatched up her hand, eyeing the diamond ring in distaste and denial. “Y—You’re not actually serious, are you? You’re really marrying him? Holy Merlin, look at the ring on that diamond!” He suddenly blurted out, holding Harry’s hand up close to his face and inspecting the jewel in awe.

Draco smiled arrogantly at his words but this soon dissipated into a vicious snarl when Ron’s followed his comment up by muttering something to Hermione beside him, his snide voice intentionally loud enough for both Draco and Harry to hear him.

“Malfoy probably thinks giving her a big diamond will make up for his smaller assets...”

Blaise actually burst out into laughter when Draco’s face flushed a deep, angry red and he lunged at the redhead in blinding fury – held back only by the strong grip Harry kept around his arm. “Nothing on me is small, you good for nothing son of a bit—”

“Draco!” Harry snapped, forcing the blonde to bite back his nasty retort and glare silently at Ron’s amused smirk. Unfortunately, he failed to anticipate the next quip that spilled out of Ron’s grinning mouth.

“That’s for sure. Your head is probably the biggest.”

This time, even Jaimee couldn’t help but bite down a laugh as she held the blonde Slytherin back once again – turning to give Ron a weak, reluctantly amused glare. “Ron, shut it. You’re almost as bad as Draco is, sometimes.” She told him pointedly and Ron looked horrified at this, shaking his head in denial.

“Draco? Ugh...That’s going to take some getting used to.” He muttered to himself, shaking his head in disgust as he conceded and took several steps away from the Malfoy heir.

At this point, Hermione finally blinked and spoke up, directing everyone’s attention to her. “Did he really beat you fair and square, Harry? Are you happy...?” She asked, causing Harry to blink and look intently at her, noting the serious tone of her voice.

Draco looked completely livid at Hermione’s question and opened his mouth to snap at her when Blaise nudged him sharply, indicating for him to keep quiet. Harry was looking at Hermione in silence, smiling at the earnest expression on the other girl’s face.

She looked briefly at Draco’s face, watching the cold silver eyes soften before she turned back and smiled at the brunette, nodding her assent. “Yes...I conceded, Hermione...It was a fair fight. And I am happy...” She assured her, causing Hermione to smile in relief and nod, surging forward and hugging the black-haired girl once more.

Before Ron could make another sarcastic comment, Blaise spoke up again – drawing their attention to him and causing Hermione to give him a smile of gratitude. “Well...Since all that drama’s been settled...Can we possibly go back to our meals now? I don’t know about all of you but I have a truckload of exams this morning and I’m not about to skip out on breakfast.” He drawled, causing everyone to nod in agreement.

Smirking, he allowed Hermione to drag him back to the Gryffindor table while Ron followed grumpily after them but not before giving

Draco another taunting glare. Draco smirked at this but his eyes narrowed in slight irritation when he saw Harry following after them.

His reached a hand out and clasped hers by her wrist, yanking her back into his arms and causing her to gasp in alarm. “Draco! What—?”

““You’re eating breakfast with me this morning, Potter. I’m going to introduce you to some of my friends now.” He quipped when he pulled away, finally causing Harry to blink herself out of her shock-induced daze for a minute before she managed to raise a single eyebrow in mild interest.

“You have friends? I thought all you had were royal subjects and bodyguards...” She mocked, causing the Malfoy heir to grin at the deadpan tone in her voice as he dragged her by her hand to the Slytherin table across the room.

“Same thing.”

As they walked hand in hand, Draco felt the deadly glares of nearly all the other males in the room burning holes into his back, noting with smug satisfaction that they were eyeing the ring on Harry’s finger and were cursing under their breath in helpless defeat.

It felt like he was prey walking across a closed room filled with packs of savage beasts that were just waiting to feast on his dead carcass and instead of intimidating him, he relished the feeling immensely, chuckling at the cold responses of his fellow males.

Fortunately enough, Harry seemed completely oblivious to the increased levels of tension and testosterone around the Great Hall and allowed Draco to lead her by her hand to where the Slytherins sat. Most of them eyed the Gryffindor in cold dislike while some were looking at her with amused smirks on their faces.

Seeing the obvious lack of space for her to sit beside him at his usual seat, Draco snapped his fingers once and Crabbe sat up, easily picking a timid-looking Slytherin second year up by his collar from his



seat. The brown-haired boy squeaked in surprise and fear, wincing as he was deposited at the end of the table.

Then, giving her another sexy grin, Draco indicated for her to take the now vacated seat, causing Jaimee's left eye to twitch in frustration. Her jaw clenched, she raised a single fist and slammed it right across his jaw, causing him to stumble backwards a few steps and a couple of Slytherin students to bolt up from their seats in indignation, ready to lung at her for her blatant attack on their leader.

She ignored them and glared pointedly at her so-called fiancé, watching as he clutched at his now sore jaw and gave her a demanding glare. "What?! I was just offering you a seat, Potter! Why did you punch me—"

"You forced that younger student right out of his seat, Malfoy! Will you grow up?!" She snapped at him, shifting her glare to Crabbe as the other Slytherin hesitatingly sat back down, more than eager to move himself from Harry's line of vision.

Draco's icy gaze held hers for a long moment, keeping the expression on his face guarded. Then, he surprised his housemates further by raising a single hand to signal the other Slytherins surrounding Harry to sit back down and leave her alone.

However, this did nothing to ease the anger out of Jaimee's face. She stepped right up to him, intending to stare him down and since she was a good deal shorter than he was, she had to tilt her chin up to meet his gaze face to face. After a couple of minutes of this, Draco finally broke away first and scowled as he sat back down, purposely avoiding his friends' amused smirk.

"Fine...I'll stop...when you're around." He had muttered the last part of his sentence under his breath so she wouldn't hear, hiding a smirk when this seemed to satisfy her and she nodded, taking the seat next to him.

Unfortunately, it seemed she forgot that she had been wearing a skirt and she winced in embarrassment when Draco growled and hastily adjusted her legs, much to the other Slytherins' heavy amusement.

“Sorry...I keep forgetting I’m a girl...Ehehe...” She quipped, offering the blonde a sheepish smile. Draco wasn’t amused but nevertheless, he turned to the watching group of Slytherins around them and finally spoke up, gesturing to the ring on Harry’s finger.

“I’m sure you’ve all figured it out by now. This is my fiancé, Jaimee...” He drawled, the superior smile on his face never wavering as he watched the mixed reactions of his housemates. Theodore Nott had simply narrowed his eyes while Malcolm shrugged in defeat and nodded his head to them in inclination. Crabbe and Goyle said nothing, rolling their eyes at each other as though unsurprised before returning to their breakfast.

Highly amused, Harry let her eyes travel over to the girls and she couldn’t help holding back a laugh when she saw the obvious contrast in their reactions. Pansy Parkinson’s eyes were red and watery and she sniffed every five seconds while trying to glare the diamond ring off of Jaimee’s finger. Millicent had glared threateningly at her before wrapping her arm tighter around Goyle’s arm, obviously signaling her to keep her hands to herself.

“That will not be a problem...” She muttered under her breath so neither of them would hear, shaking her head at the thought. Averting her eyes away from Millicent, her eyes came upon Daphne Greengrass and she was surprised to see the other girl giving her a reluctant smile – or rather a smirk – which seemed like the closest thing to a smile for a Slytherin anyway.

“So do we start taking orders from her too? Do we call her ‘Lady Malfoy’ or something like that?” Crabbe asked bluntly before shoving an entire slice of bread into his mouth. Harry stared at him – cringing at the term ‘Lady Malfoy’.

“What? Lady Malfoy?! Are you serious?!” She gaped in a high voice, her head flipping back and forth between Draco’s haughty smirk and Crabbe’s bored, inquisitive glance.

“Vince, I appreciate the sentiment but you don’t have to follow me or anything. Quite frankly, I don’t need you to.” Harry rushed out before Draco could answer, much to her fiancé’s obvious disappointment.

“You’re no fun, Potter. What’s the point of having friends if you can’t order them around every once in awhile? And don’t call him Vince! His name is Crabbe.” Draco said with a scoff. Jaimee glared at him – much to the disbelief of the other Slytherins watching.

“Oh I don’t know, Draco...Did you ever get the idea that maybe friends are not supposed to follow you around like a pack of bodyguards? Why don’t you start by calling Vince and Greg here by their real names?” She pointed out, causing the smirk on Draco’s face to fade into a scowl as Crabbe looked at them in amazement.

“Potter, shut it...I will allow you one moral lecture per day. Nothing more. You already used up your limit so just eat your breakfast and stop nagging me!” Draco threatened but before Jaimee could argue with him, Goyle finally spoke up, redirecting both their attention to his amused laughter.

“I like her, Draco...She’s able to fight against you the way we never had the guts to. That’s definitely Potter alright.” He mused, causing Millicent to chuckle lightly beside him at the implication of his words. Draco didn’t seem to appreciate their amusement at his expense and he shifted his glare towards them.

“Goyle, why don’t you shovel more food into your mouth before I do it for you and make you choke on your own—”

“So...Harry...How is Draco in bed? Is he any good? Pansy and I have always wanted to know...” Daphne spoke up, cutting through Draco’s angry tirade and forcing all the attention on Harry. The Gryffindor’s eyes widened in surprise, obviously caught off guard.

“Leave her alone, Daphne. Just because you and Pansy never got into Malfoy’s pants, doesn’t mean you can go torturing Potter like that.” Malcolm drawled lazily, turning and giving Jaimee an amused grin. She returned it with a grateful nod, avoiding the interested and

slightly suggestive stares she was receiving from some of the Slytherin boys waiting for her answer.

Draco glared warningly at them and wrapped an arm around her waist, pulling her body closer to him. He was just about to answer Daphne's question for her when he saw the devious gleam in Harry's eyes as she turned back to give the other girl a very Draco-like smirk.

"He actually likes it rough. I'm bruised all over." She answered simply, shrugging nonchalantly amidst Draco promptly choking on his water beside her. It was Daphne's turn to blush now as her gaze averted from Harry to Draco until it dropped to the floor in embarrassed shock.

Seeing Daphne – the tactless girl who seemed to have no limits in asking the most intrusive questions – now blushing and gaping at the floor in embarrassment was all too much for the other Slytherins and they all burst out into sniggers, hiding smirks behind their hands and giving Harry an appraising grin.

Draco didn't appreciate her open admission and glared at Jaimee in silent anger, causing her to smile back innocently at the heavy blush on his face. "What? Your friend asked me a question and I answered it for her. I'm not going to blush over sex, Draco...I was a guy once too." She told him and he shook his head, burying his face in his hands.

She was just about to tease him further when she felt a dainty hand yank hers forward, causing her to yelp in surprise and look up to see Pansy holding her hand up to her face to inspect her engagement ring up close. A scowl was visible on her pug face as she stared at it, much to the growing impatience of Harry as she found that she was unable to eat with only one hand.

"Parkinson, unless you want to ask for my hand in marriage, can you let me go so I can eat?" She asked calmly, tugging her hand free and watching in amusement as Pansy simply huffed and slinked back down on her seat but not before giving Harry another hateful snarl.

"O-kay...What's her problem?" Jaimee asked curiously, turning back to look at Draco and she was surprised when the Slytherin winced

and shook his head in dismay. Millicent answered for him, tilting her head briefly to the girl beside her in distaste.

“She’s just disappointed because if Draco hadn’t found a wife of his choice by the end of his hunting season, he would have been forced to marry Pansy.” The slightly chubby girl answered, causing Pansy to snap her head at her and give her a scathing glare.

“Why don’t you mind your own business you fat, oversized pig?! Do something useful for a change! Like go on a diet!” She mocked loudly, much to Harry’s shock as Millicent looked highly insulted and looked away, avoiding the amused sniggers Draco, Malcolm and Theodore were trying, and pretty much failing, to hide behind their hands. Even Daphne was trying to muffle a couple of giggles and Pansy sneered widely at this, obviously proud of herself.

Goyle also looked as though he wanted to say something against Pansy’s outburst in defense of his girlfriend but looking at Draco’s amusement, he began thinking twice about speaking out lest he brought the Malfoy heir’s wrath upon them. Almost as though she read his thoughts, Harry spoke up for him – speaking above Draco’s laughter.

“Pansy, I would suggest looking at a mirror before you start insulting other girls. If there’s anything I’ve learned, it’s that it certainly isn’t easy to be one...Being a girl all your life, you should be aware of that. You have no right to think so highly of yourself when you seem to be marketing the face of a pug.” Harry piped in snidely, causing Millicent to blink up at her in surprise and Pansy to inhale a sharp intake of breath in shock.

The other guys around them fell silent and Draco seemed to look up at Harry with a reluctant smile as she turned back to Millicent and gave the girl a knowing wink, which the Slytherin returned with a weak, speechless nod. “Besides, back when I was a guy...I thought Millie here was actually quite cute in a modest sort of way. Congratulations to you, Greg.” She nodded, looking up into Goyle’s blinking face.

He seemed to look at her as though she had grown an extra head for several seconds before he nodded and grinned, turning to give Millicent a kiss on the forehead. "Yes, she is...And I hate to say this, Malfoy...But I believe you just met your match." He added further, causing the group around them to erupt in another round of laughter.

Draco's face paled in sudden realization and groaned out loud, burying his face in his hands.

"Bloody hell...I am engaged to Harry Potter..."

"(A)...Acceptable? Tss..."

Sighing in exhaustion, Jaimee turned around at the sound of Ron's voice to see him approaching her with a grim look on his face. The sweltering heat of Snape's classroom didn't help their mood and they both collapsed back into their seats in silence, watching as the rest of their classmates lined up to take their practical midterm exam near the front of the room.

For the first half of the period, Snape had made them all line up in front of his desk one by one and had instructed them to narrate and perform the steps for making a specific potion he would select for them – during which he graded their skill, memory and precision.

She had been among the first to finish her midterms and needless to say, she was rather unsatisfied with the results. She had gotten a single letter grade higher than Ron – an (E) for Exceeds Expectations instead of the (O) she was hoping for.

Applications for the Auror department at the Ministry would begin in a couple of weeks and Snape was not making it any easier on her. She needed a final average of (O) in all her subjects that year for her to qualify as an Auror and Potions was the one subject she needed to keep track of.

To add to her insult, Snape had been relentless enough to assign her to make a Veritaserum potion – the very potion he had messed up

with the Cirrissurum at the beginning of all this. When the Potions master had seen the Malfoy insignia imprinted clearly on the diamond ring around her finger, he had sneered in distaste but said nothing, his lips curling into a mocking sneer.

This same expression on his face hadn't changed the entire time she was taking her exam and only flickered into a derisive scoff and a mocking laugh every now and then when she stuttered or whenever it seemed like she had made a mistake with her narrated steps – which she later found out was actually correct.

She grumbled under her breath and watched with a displeased scowl as Draco proceeded to the front of the line to take his exam. Much to her annoyance, Snape greeted his godson with a smile and nod, watching proudly as Draco began narrating and making his assigned Potion with perfect ease and confidence.

Feeling a bit put out at this, she looked away from the depressing sight and turned in surprise to see Hermione taking her seat to her left. The Head Girl looked highly disappointed as well, meeting Jaimee's concerned look with a frown.

"The exam didn't go so well for you too, huh?" Jaimee asked, giving the other girl a consoling pat on the shoulder.

Hermione cringed and shrugged it off, running a hand through her hair in frustration. "I said all the right steps and made the potion perfectly! I don't understand how or why he only gave me an (E)! An (E) for Merlin's sake! I never get an (E)!" She complained loudly, her eyes tearing up in frustration and Ron rolled his eyes at this, looking irritated at Hermione's endless perfectionism.

"Get over it, Hermione! You probably got higher than everybody else around here! I only got an (A) and I'm relatively satisfied." He reasoned and Harry winced as Hermione snapped at them both, causing the two Gryffindors to slouch down in their seats.

"That's you, Ronald! You're always satisfied with mediocrity! I, on the other hand, need top grades if I want to be accepted into the CISO

Department of the Ministry!" She snapped at him, causing Ron to look at Harry in confusion.

"Since when? What's CISO?"

"Central Intelligence and Strategic Operations. It's the brain behind the Ministry. Hermione has been dying to get in ever since McGonagall told her about it during her career counseling session last week." Harry whispered to him, hiding another cringe when Hermione sighed and dropped her forehead on her table in defeat.

When the brunette looked up at her with a forced smile, Harry relented and leaned down to stroke her best friend's hair in a gesture of reassurance and comfort. "Hermione, relax...Don't worry. You're going to get in, alright? We both are...I promise that one day, you'll be the Head of CISO and I'll be the Head of the Auror department. You'll see." She promised, winking at the other girl.

Beside them, Ron feigned a frown and looked at them with wide, puppy dog eyes. "What about me? I want to be the Head of a wicked department too." He kidded, causing both girls to laugh at his expression.

"To be honest, Ron...You never told either of us what you wanted to be after Hogwarts...What are your career plans?" Hermione asked him curiously, their Potions grades finally forgotten. To their surprise, Ron suddenly reddened and he gave them a mischievous grin, reaching a hand into his bag and pulling out a small pamphlet.

Harry's eyes widened when she saw the cover, reading the title of the brochure out loud. "Department of Finance and Inter-Magical Investments...Really, Ron? You're into Finance?" Harry asked in surprise, her eyes darting to Ron's embarrassed grin as he laughed and ducked his head sheepishly in admission.

"Actually...Bill talked me into it just a couple of months ago and I decided to look into it more by asking around. Professor McGonagall gave me this during my career counseling session." He began, blushing darker when both Hermione and Jaimee leaned in closer to listen to him.



“Apparently, this department is responsible for interacting with all of Wizarding England’s biggest companies and financial institutions, as well as coordinating them with the Ministry of Magic and other magical companies around the world. If I get accepted, it has a huge starting salary and I’m hoping to use it to earn enough money until I can eventually start up my own company one day.” He told them and to this, Jaimee grinned and gave him an affectionate punch on the shoulder.

“Sounds like a plan to me, freckles. Go for it! Personally, I think this is right up your alley. You’ve always been pretty good with money... Well, a lot better than me obviously.” She kidded, causing Hermione to laugh in agreement.

“I agree with Harry, Ron...I think that’s great and we’re both really happy for you. Plus, it’ll be interesting that we’ll be seeing each other often in the Ministry. Maybe we can have lunch and dinner everyday.” She added, winking at the both of them and giggling when they grinned back.

“Of course...That’s on the days that Mrs. Malfoy here doesn’t have to ‘leave work early to have tea with the family’.” Ron finished the last part of the sentence in a high-pitched, snobby drawl that caused Hermione to giggle and Jaimee to flush and glare at him in annoyance.

“Don’t call me that! I’m not married to him yet! And what did I tell you both about me being a housewife?! Ugh! Imagine me...Harry James Potter...wearing an apron and cooking all day long in a kitchen?” She shuddered, growling when her two best friends began to snigger louder and desperately tried to muffle their voices behind their hands lest Snape heard them.

Once their laughter was in check, Hermione spoke again – this time giving Harry a sincere smile. “Seriously though, Harry...I’m really happy for you. If all those things you said Draco did are true...Then I’m sure you’ll be happy with him. Even if we still think he has the biggest head to walk this planet.” She added as an afterthought, causing Jaimee to roll her eyes and Ron to smirk in agreement.

“Says the girl who is ‘trial-dating’ the big-head’s best friend.” He piped in, causing Harry to turn and raise a single eyebrow at Hermione’s blushing face. “Trial-dating? What does that even mean?” She asked pointedly, causing Hermione to stare blankly at her, struggling for the right words to say.

“W—Well...It means we’re testing our differences and checking to see whether we’re compatible together as an actual couple or not...” She explained testily, watching as Harry and Ron turned to face each other blankly in confusion.

“I don’t get it.” Ron blurted out in a deadpan voice, causing Harry to smirk and nod her head in agreement, giving Hermione an incredulous look.

“I agree with Ron, Hermione. It’s either you’re shagging the guy or not. It’s that simple. That’s the beauty of the way a guy’s mind thinks. Girls make it too complicated.” She told her and in spite of herself, a ghost of a smile flickered on Hermione’s face.

She would have said more but that was when Seamus interrupted their conversation by exclaiming rather loudly and rushing over to them, slinging an arm around Jaimee’s shoulders and giving the three Gryffindors a beaming smile.

“I passed! I bloody passed! I barely scraped by with an (A) but I passed! And to think I stayed up all night cramming for this exam! Woohoo!” He cheered in happiness, much to Jaimee’s amusement as she laughed and attempted to shrug his arm off her shoulders.

“Happy much, are you?” Ron complained, rubbing his sore ears from Seamus’ loud outburst. He rolled his eyes and looked up at the Irish boy’s grinning face. “I barely understood half the rubbish I read last night, Ron! Of course I’m bloody happy! I guess Snape finds me completely and shaggably irresistible after all...” He added in thought, wagging his eyebrows suggestively up and down and causing all three teenagers – Ron, Harry and Hermione – to groan out loud.

“Seamus, stop shouting! Snape’s already glaring in our direction! A little more and he’ll give us detention.” Dean cut in as he joined them, his eyes moving down to glare pointedly at the arm Seamus still had wrapped around Jaimee’s slim shoulders.

Jaimee looked slightly uncomfortable at this and tried to shove him off but Seamus only seemed to grin wider at Dean’s jealousy and proceeded to wrap his other arm tighter around Jaimee’s shoulders from behind, leaning down and resting his chin on top of her head.

“What’s the matter, Dean? Five months into our relationship and you’re still jealous whenever I hug someone else, aren’t you?” He teased but he didn’t get the reaction he was hoping for as Dean merely chuckled and shook his head, crossing his arms smugly over his chest.

“You know what, Seamus? Just for that, I won’t even try saving you out of this one.” He commented with a smile, watching the confusion etching onto Seamus’ face. “Save me? Save me out of what?” He pressed further, regrettably unaware of the angry presence that was now approaching dangerously behind him.

Still smirking, Dean looked over Jaimee’s shoulder and both she and Seamus followed his gaze, turning around slowly just in time to Draco looming dangerously over them with a cold glint in his harsh, gray eyes. Seamus gulped and laughed nervously, watching the Slytherin’s lips curl into an angry sneer as he glared at the hands Seamus still had yet to unwrap from Harry’s shoulders.

Without saying anything, Draco cocked a single eyebrow at the Irish Gryffindor and Seamus instantly yanked his hands away from Jaimee as though she had caught on fire – knocking himself clumsily to the floor and stumbling noisily into a few tables as he hurriedly backed himself away into a far corner of the classroom.

As soon as he had gone, Dean sniggered and strode after him, leaving Jaimee grinning nervously up at her fiancé. Ron and Hermione both quickly tore their gaze away from the strange couple and buried their noses into their Potions books, pretending to read while at the same time, straining to listen to their conversation.

"H—Hey, Draco...How was your exam? What grade did Snape give you?" Harry asked casually, trying to divert Draco's attention before the blonde could ask her why Seamus was actually hugging her in the first place.

It seemed to work as Draco finally turned to her and rewarded her with his winning smile. He looked particularly pleased with himself as he answered, reaching over and dusting Jaimee around the shoulders where Seamus had touched her. "It was alright. I got an (O)as usual. What did you get?" He asked, smirking when he noticed the angry flush on her face.

Hermione heard this and her eyes snapped up to glare at Draco as well, much to the blonde's amusement. "You got an (O)?! That is just so unfair! This is a classic case of favoritism and I can not believe that Snape would—"

"Oh give it a rest, Granger. No matter what you do, you will never outrank me." Draco mocked loudly, giving the Head Girl a cold sneer before he turned, planted a kiss on Harry's forehead and headed back to his friends, leaving her helpless at the mercy of Hermione's fierce, death glare.

"Now, now, 'Mione...I'm a victim here too. We got the same grade...You should get angry at Malfoy and not—OW!" Harry's sentence ended in a cry of pain when Hermione's hand had landed a rather sharp slap on her face. She stumbled against the table, snapping her head back up and glaring at her best friend in anger.

"Why did you slap me?! Mione! That hurt! I'm not exactly a guy anymore so my face is no longer made to be slapped! You could have slapped Ron!" She argued, rubbing her sore cheek and looking back to Draco to find him smirking at her from across the room.

She shot him a poisonous glare before she turned back to find Hermione sulking in her seat. Ron was protectively covering his face with his thick Potions book, his shoulders shaking in obvious laughter at the scene he had witnessed.

"I wanted to slap Malfoy and since you're going to be one soon, I figured you'd do." Hermione muttered darkly under her breath. Harry's cheeks colored even more at her words and she groaned out loud, clutching her aching cheek in pain.

"Brilliant...Haha. Very witty, Hermione. That makes me feel loads better." She mumbled, sighing and turning back to the front of the room as everyone began to take their seats, signaling the end of their midterm exam and the beginning of second period.

At the front of the room, Snape was still seated at his desk and was cleaning around, re-organizing the ingredients back into their proper place. Letting her eyes trail around the room, Harry noticed that Draco had gone back to the corner of the room where he sat with Blaise and some of the other Slytherins.

Seeing her looking at him, he gave her a playful wink before he began setting up his cauldron and gathering his materials, turning back to face the front of the class. Following his gaze, Jaimee's eyes narrowed in deep thought as she saw Daphne Greengrass walk right up to Snape with a coy smile on her face, twirling a strand of her hair flirtatiously around her finger as she tried to indiscreetly ask him to make a consideration on her grade.

Sheesh...The things girls are capable of doing to ask for what they want. She actually thinks she can flirt her way around her grade. It's despicable...It's vile and wrong...It's... Jaimee's eyes snapped open and her eyes darted wildly from Snape's adamant glare and Daphne's disappointed pout, the wheels in her mind already ticking away in another one of her Slytherin-ish schemes.

It's BRILLIANT!

She smirked inwardly as she observed Daphne's failed seduction ploy – noting to herself exactly where the Slytherin girl had failed in her attempts to draw Snape's attention. Not enough skin, Greengrass! Honestly, silly girls...They don't know the first thing about what seduces a man...

But...Jaimee let her thoughts trail off, a devious smirk already working its way onto her face.

As Daphne walked away with slumped, disappointed shoulders back to her seat and Snape began to spell the curtains closed to begin his lecture, the sneer on Jaimee's face settled into a very sexy smile and her hands dropped down, unbuttoning the top buttons of her shirt.

Giggling behind her hand, she pulled her skirt up higher on her waist and very slowly eased herself out of her seat. Ignoring Ron's surprised question, she began walking towards the teacher's table, a sexy smirk on her face and a definite seductive sway to her hips.

But 'I' do...

What does that little minx think she's doing walking like 'that'?! Draco thought furiously, gritting his teeth in anger as he watched his supposed girlfriend sauntering very sexily up to the front of the class to where Snape was leafing through a thick Potions book at the teacher's table.

The short Gryffindor skirt did nothing to hide the pale skin of her legs and as she walked to the front, Draco literally felt his vision go into slow motion as he watched just about every virile male in the room turn their head to watch in avid fascination at the lustful sight. Her hair fell into gorgeous, sexy waves down her shoulders – bouncing as she walked and the top of her blouse was suddenly left open, exposing a tantalizing view of her full breasts.

She stopped upon reaching Snape's table and leaned down, resting both her palms on the table's surface and bending forward ever so slightly so as to allow the male students behind her a teasing view of the skin of her legs just below her arse.

"Professor...?"

Her voice was low and sultry, successfully making her male classmates' eyes darken in arousal and drawing Snape's attention as he snapped his head up from his book to glare at her.

"Potter, you insufferable nuisance! Go back to your seat before I make you swallow all these potions in one—"

He wasn't expecting her to be so close, however, and his angry retort was halted immediately on his lips, his eyes involuntarily snapping downward to her exposed cleavage.

That...bitch! Draco thought, his eyes narrowing when he realized what she meant to do. He would have stopped her but he felt himself getting aroused as well as he watched, his eyes trailing up and down her legs and resting on the patch of skin that was exposed just below her waist.

As though sensing his eyes on her, Jaimee seemed to smirk wider and bent down a bit more, causing the hem of her blouse to rise up higher and expose more of her pale skin to the hungry eyes of about twenty watching males behind her – her gaping best friend and her furious fiancé included.

Her palms lay close to each other on the table, forcing her breasts together as she leaned forward. She held back a laugh as Snape's usually pallor face reddened and he leaned away, raising one hand to loosen the collar of his robes.

"P—Potter, what in Merlin's name do you think you're doing?! Cover those...things...up at once and go back to your s—seat!" The once eloquent Potions master stuttered, unable to look away from the gorgeous sight and Jaimee prevented another laugh as she leaned closer, setting her lips into an adorable pout designed to make any man melt.

Evil, conniving bitch! Wait till I wrap my hands around that pretty little neck! Draco thought again, his hands clenching into fists and his face set into an angry growl as he found himself unable to stand up from his seat due to the now obvious bulge in his pants.

“Professor, I was hoping you could help me out with something...” She coyly trailed off as she bit her lip, letting her voice fade in a soft whisper that sent a shiver down Draco’s spine. It must have had the same effect on Snape as the black-haired man backed away even more until he was pressing against the backrest of his seat, beads of sweat breaking out onto his face.

“P-Potter, the grade I gave you is f—f—final! I c—can’t go around changing s—students’ grades—” His voice broke off into a high-pitched meep and his book fell from his hands onto the floor, causing a feigned look of worry onto Jaimee’s face.

“Oh, I’m sorry, Professor! Here...Let me get that for you...” She drawled in a low voice, her eyes fluttering seductively up at him before she turned around and bent down slowly to pick up the book – smirking wider when she felt about ten pairs of eyes on her arse and about another ten roaming up and down the legs exposed by her skirt.

Bitch...Bitch...Bitch! Draco cursed helplessly in his head again and again, his fingers tightening around the now mangled quill in his hands as he watched his fiancé pull herself back up and hand the book to Snape with another gorgeous smile.

Behind her, Hermione was watching the entire scene unfold with curiosity and confusion while Ron’s jaw was hanging and he sputtered incoherently – reminding Draco very vividly of a large-mouthed fish he had seen in his grandfather’s aquarium.

“P—Potter...C-Cover yourself up right now and g—get the b—bloody hell away f—from me...And I will b—bump your grade u—up from an (E) t—to an (O)...Happy?! N—now, g—go back to your seat! NOW!” Snape finally exploded as she handed him back his book, pulling himself away from her only to erupt into another loud, high-pitched scream.

In his wild attempt to get away from her, his seat keeled backwards and he stumbled noisily onto the floor, sending more parchments and books crashing with him and scattering around the room in disarray.



Draco watched, his jaw now hanging open in disbelief and indignation as Jaimee smiled sweetly at the poor, stuttering man who had once been their Potions Professor before sauntering back calmly to her seat, turning just in time to smirk tauntingly at him and blow him a mocking kiss.

“Bitch!” He hissed sharply at her, growling louder when she merely winked at the angry blazing of fire and lust in his eyes. Purposely turning away from him, she ignored the fact that a seething red Hermione was already reaching out for her neck and turned to Ron instead, meeting Ron’s appraising grin and thumbs-up sign with a wide smile.

Harry grinned widely at him.

“You know...I could really get used to this girl stuff.”

“What’s this all about, Cartwright?” Anton Malfoy drawled lazily as he walked into the elegant sitting room of the Cartwright estate in France, his blue eyes immediately drawn to the gown-clad figure standing near the windows.

Feigning a look of surprise, the figure turned slowly and he found himself staring expectantly into the beautiful face of his ex-fiancé, Elisa Cartwright. She flashed him a smile that didn’t reach her elegant green eyes and Anton squinted as the light reflected from her diamond earrings blinded him slightly in the eyes.

“Anton, darling...I’m so happy you could make it on such short notice.” She greeted cheerfully, turning around fully and allowing him to see the full effect of her expensive gown and jewelry. He raised an eyebrow at her, clearly bored and unimpressed and waited impatiently for her to explain herself.

Chuckling at his suspicious glare, Elisa sauntered over to him in her usual graceful steps and pulled him down to sit on one of the lush couches before taking the seat beside him. “You always were such an impatient man, weren’t you? No matter, I’ll get right to my point.”

She said sweetly, reaching into her purse and pulling out a small, crumpled sheet of paper.

Anton rolled his eyes and checked his watch, his eyes narrowing in irritation at her deliberate stalling. "Elisa, I don't have time for this. If you've asked me here for another diamond to compensate for our broken engagement, that's fine. But I promised to meet my mother for dinner and—"

Without saying a word, Elisa's eyes narrowed and she quickly handed him the slip of paper in her hand, silently urging him to read it. Sighing in exasperation, Anton took the slip of paper and held it up to the light, his eyebrows fusing together as he read the slightly faded and rumpled words.

After a couple of minutes, his face had suddenly paled and he looked up at her in shock and disbelief, his eyes widening in dismay. "Wh— What is this?! Cartwright, where did you find this?!" He demanded, surging up from his seat and glaring at her in disgust.

Elisa shrugged and gave him another sweet smile, crossing her legs daintily in response. "Some of my friends from Hogwarts found it off the school grounds and sent it to me. The minute I read it, I knew we could both benefit from it...So what do you think? You want to help me? We show that to Draco and we can kiss their little engagement good bye." She mused gleefully, flicking a hateful gaze over at the morning's tabloids laid out on the coffee table in front of her.

There on the front page was a picture of both Draco and Jaimee Potter's profile pictures, under which the title "Prime Match of the Season" was written in clear, bold letters. The news had come out just that morning and the minute she had seen it, Elisa knew she had to take action. She wanted to be the next Malfoy heiress! Not that boy-turned-debutante-disaster!

"You're going to help me, right? I know you want Jaimee Potter and I want Draco...We'll both get what we want, won't we?" She spoke up cautiously as Anton paced the room, running a shaking hand through his blonde hair.

Anton turned wide, worried eyes to her and hastily shook his head, his jaw tightening in resolute indignation. "No! I don't want to do this! I don't want anything to do with this anymore, I'm done! I played him once, that's enough for me! Draco's still my cousin and that is my family you are talking about, Elisa!" He growled at her, causing the girl's eyes to darken as she shot up from her seat.

"What are you talking about, Anton?! Since when have you been all morally righteous about all this?! I thought you wanted more attention from your family?!" She screamed at him, trying to yank the slip of paper from his grasp but Anton shook his head firmly and shoved her away, forcing her back onto the couch.

"I did...And I have that now! I won't do this anymore, I've had enough! I'm sorry, Elisa. We're done here." He hissed coldly, stuffing the slip of paper into his pocket. Seeing this, Elisa's eyes widened in fury and she shot up again, attempting to snatch the paper away from him.

"I'm taking this back to Grandfather...I'm really sorry. I'm not going to help you." He finished, already making his way towards the door. Elisa chased after him, linking her arms around him and yanking him towards her.

"You bastard! What are you doing?! What is the matter with you?! Why are you being so righteous all of a sudden?!" She shrieked, her attempts useless as once again, Anton shoved her back down onto the couch, shaking his head in disbelief at her futile attempts.

He buttoned up his jacket and turned to walk out of the room, stopping just in front of the exit and turning around to give her one last, look of disgust. "Let's just say...I'm indebted to do this. Good bye, Miss Elisa." He drawled, smirking at the look of confusion on Elisa's face.

After he said this, he finally turned and walked out of the room, leaving her glaring hatefully at him as she stood back up and flung the glass of water on the table towards him, watching it shatter into pieces as it hit the door.

"YOU BASTARD!"

“Draco, no! You can’t make me go in there! You can’t!”

Draco sighed in exhaustion as he dragged Harry by her hand down the long corridor heading towards the Headmaster’s office where his family was waiting for them. They had been at this for hours and he was tired of chasing her every couple of seconds.

“Malfoy! Let me go!” She screeched again and just as Draco distractedly glared at the concerned students passing them in the corridor, Harry managed to wrench her arm out of his grip and dash off towards the opposite direction.

“Damn it, Potter! Stop running!” Draco yelled impatiently as he tore off after her, shoving past several students as he chased her through a couple of corridors. Looking over her shoulder at him, she grabbed a random, hardbound book from a Gryffindor first year and hurled it at him, causing the Head Boy to curse in annoyance when the book hit him painfully on his shoulder.

“Potter! Get back here!” He growled, forcing himself to run faster as Harry rounded the corner and accelerated her speed, silently thanking the gods that she had been smart enough to wear her sneakers that morning instead of her proper school shoes.

She whirled around again and cheered silently when she saw that she had lost her adamant fiancé and that he was no longer behind her. Just as she grinned at the thought of making it back to the safety of her common room, her eyes widened when she looked ahead and found herself heading straight for a large wall.

It was only about a half-second before impact that she noticed the wall was actually Crabbe and Goyle.

“YEOW!”

Harry grunted as she tumbled ungracefully onto the floor, her bag falling off her shoulders and spilling out messily onto the ground.

Groaning and clutching at her aching head, she looked up to find that both Crabbe and Goyle seemed to be holding back a laugh as they grabbed her by her collar and lifted her up from the ground, keeping her in place.

“PUT ME DOWN RIGHT NOW! THIS INSTANT! I MEAN IT! I’M GOING TO KICK YOUR ARSES! SERIOUSLY, PUT ME DOWN! WHAT DID I TELL YOU GUYS ABOUT BLINDLY FOLLOWING ORDERS?!” She raged at them, trying in vain to unclasp the large hand Crabbe had around her collar.

She began struggling and screaming in frustration as Crabbe placed her bag back on her shoulder, waved farewell to Goyle and began walking back to the Headmaster’s office, holding her up by her collar as though she was a mere kitten. He smirked in amusement as her feet did nothing but dangle and kick around madly in mid-air in her attempts to break free.

Several students they passed looked on in amusement, laughing at the sight of the girl-who-lived and the savior of the wizarding world being manhandled by Vincent Crabbe of all people. Seeing this, Harry glared threateningly at them and gave them a fierce, hideous snarl.

“Oh yeah?! You all think this is funny?! I’m going to remember all your faces and the minute I break free, I will hunt you down one by one! Do you hear me?!” She snapped at them, resuming her kicking but when Crabbe simply grunted and held her up higher above the ground, the students watching laughed harder, shaking their heads at the comical sight.

As they rounded a corner and Jaimee caught sight of a handsome, smirking blonde leaning one shoulder along the entrance to Dumbledore’s office, her kicking ceased and she groaned out loud, sighing helplessly in defeat.

“Sorry, Potter...It’s out of my hands. Good luck in there.” Crabbe muttered under his breath as he set her down in front of Draco, chuckling as he turned and sauntered off, leaving a heavily breathing Jaimee glaring at her smirking fiancé with murder in her eyes.

Draco gave her an impish grin and straightened himself, gesturing to the entrance. "Shall we—" His voice broke off as she whirled around and broke off into a run again but this time, he had anticipated it and he wrapped both his arms around her waist from behind, holding her struggling against his chest.

"Let me go! Draco, I am not ready to play family right now! Especially with your family so please let me go so I can—"

"Shh...It's alright...It'll be okay..." He whispered soothingly into her ear, tightening his arms around her waist and leaning forward to place a gentle kiss on her soft cheek. Sighing in exhaustion, she finally allowed her muscles to relax and collapsed against him, closing her eyes as she felt his hands going up to caress the skin of her arms.

Chuckling gently, he turned her around so that she was staring up into his eyes and he smiled, reaching up and tapping her playfully on her cheek. "Half of my family already loves you, Harry...You have nothing to be scared of. They just want to meet you, that's all. I promise, it'll be fine." He reassured her, watching the panic slowly seeping out of her lovely face.

After a couple more minutes of breathing slowly and looking up into Draco's encouraging smile, she finally nodded and buried her face against his chest, inhaling his familiar scent. "Alright...But if they start talking about children and pregnancy, so help me, I swear I'll—"

Laughing, he squeezed her once before planting a kiss on the top of her head. "I'll stop them, don't worry." He promised, tilting her chin up to reward her with a chaste kiss on the lips.

When he pulled back, he took her hand and intertwined their fingers together, squeezing it in comfort as he began leading her to the entrance. Swallowing the lump in her throat, Harry watched him muttering the password out loud before the doors swung open and they stepped inside, both of them yelping out loud and ducking when a large goblet of pumpkin juice instantly went flying at their faces.

“CISSA! HOW DARE YOU HURL YOUR DRINK AT ME?! I WAS STILL TALKING!”

“Sirius...?” Harry asked meekly, her voice cracking as she recognized the distinct growling voice of her godfather.

She and Draco rose back up and stared blankly up at the scene in front of them, their eyes nearly bulging out of their sockets. Sirius Black was right in the middle of it all – arguing very loudly with a pink-faced, scowling Narcissa Malfoy who was currently fanning herself in an attempt to remove the flush from her cheeks.

Behind her, Lucius Malfoy was pouring over a stack of parchments and beside him – seated on Dumbledore’s vacated desk – Lawrence Malfoy was watching the entire scene with a calm, amused smirk. An elegant woman in her early fifties sat beside him, her eyes flicking upwards to meet Jaimee’s in warm welcome.

Around the room, Harry could make out several more familiar faces – a smirking Byron Malfoy seated calmly near the entrance, a slightly cringing William and Reginald Malfoy who were both watching the scene with relative concern a couple of feet away. Two beautiful women about Harry’s age – one blonde, one brunette – held the arms of William and Reggie respectively and seeing Jaimee there, they smiled warmly at her in greeting.

Forcing an awkward smile back, Jaimee turned her attention back to her godfather and nearly choked when she saw him lunge forward and seize Lucius by the front of his robes, jostling the other man as he growled.

“I told you, Lucius! I will not sign this bloody engagement seal unless I talk to my goddaughter myself and she confirms that your son beat her because to be brutally honest, I have doubts that anyone can beat my Jaimee—”

“Sirius! I’m here!” Harry rushed out, drawing all adults’ attention on her as she rushed into the room. Sirius’ eyes immediately whirled on her and he gaped upon seeing her intertwined hands with Draco, a familiar fire bursting in his eyes.

Draco saw this and began to back away, a nervous laugh escaping his throat. “H—Harry...He’s doing that weird look again...G—get him away from me before he—YARGH!” Draco stumbled backwards as Sirius attempted to attack him again, held back only by Lucius’ grip on his robes.

“You will keep away from my only son and heir, Black.” He said calmly, keeping Sirius firmly in place as he turned and greeted Draco with a cordial smile. “Draco, I believe you have some important news to tell us. Why don’t you inform Black here of your successful overture?” He prompted, drawing all the other Malfoys’ attention to his son.

Draco nodded and held up Jaimee’s hand, indicating the engagement ring on her finger. “Last night at around eleven, Jaimee conceded in battle. My chosen bride has accepted to be my wife and to be the next noble heiress of our family. We are to be married as soon as possible.” He recited the formal words right out of memory from their family’s tradition, failing to see all the blood rushing out of Harry’s stunned face.

“M—Malfoy...Heiress?”

No one heard her as most of the Malfoys in the room applauded at the familiar words, eyeing Jaimee with a warm, approving smile.

“H—Heiress? M—Married as s—soon as p—possible?!”

Draco didn’t hear the desperation in her voice as Narcissa rushed forward and pulled him into a tearful hug, planting kisses all over his face. Byron had stood up and walked over to him, giving him a punch on the shoulder while Reggie and William grinned at him, patting their older cousin on the back.

Lucius smirked and turned to Sirius once more, holding up the engagement contract with a smug smile on his face. Growling, Sirius snatched it from his hand and bent down to the table to sign it, muttering under his breath about ‘cheating Malfoy bastards’.



Amidst all this, Harry was still in shock – her eyes glazed over as Draco's words echoed over and over again in her head. Malfoy heiress...Marriage...Soon... A soft whimper escaped her lips and she collapsed back down onto the vacated seat behind her, failing to notice the elegant woman beside Lawrence smiling at her from the Headmaster's table.

"You'll do just fine, sweetie..." She told her, finally rousing the distraught girl from her thoughts as she looked up into the woman's exquisite features. She smiled again as Jaimee stood back up and hastily smiled back in embarrassment, unsure of what to say.

When the woman noticed her hesitation, she laughed and checked herself – walking over to gather the uncertain girl into a warm hug. "I'm terribly sorry for my rudeness. I'm Draco's grandmother, Genevieve Malfoy. I'm delighted to meet you, my dear. Lawrence has already spoken of your fierce spirit, I can't say I'm not a little eager to get to know you better." She admitted, watching as the tension in Harry's face relaxed and she finally allowed a genuine smile.

"You're Lawrence's wife...? Well...I have to say I was expecting someone a bit more—"

"Cold and distant?" She supplied for her with a knowing smile, causing Jaimee to choke in shock. Genevieve laughed at this and shook her head, looking amused at the girl's reaction. "Yes, my husband is known to be rather insufferable sometimes but I consider myself a...Well, let's just say a misfit in the Malfoy family." She told her, shaking her head and at this, Harry rewarded her with another friendly smile.

"If you were a misfit, Mrs. Malfoy, I can only imagine how I'd be—"

She would have liked to talk more but at that moment, Sirius had approached her and yanked on her elbow, forcing her to excuse herself from Genevieve and whirl around to face him. Wincing at his irate features, he pulled her into a corner of the room away from the chattering Malfoys and began to speak – his voice coming in a low, angry hiss.

“We don’t have to go through with this, you know! I know you made a deal about how you have to marry the one person who beats you but nobody should be forced into a marriage like this, Harry! I’ll fight for you, I’ll tell them that you’re infertile! Or—”

“Infertile?! Sirius! I—”

“What?! It’s the perfect excuse, they’ll let us go in an instant!”

Harry sighed and shook her head, giving her godfather a calm look. “Sirius, I am not being forced into this. When Draco said I conceded, I really did concede. I wanted to lose to him.” She explained, nearly causing a vein to pop in Sirius’ neck.

“What?! Why would you want to do that?!” He demanded, his voice rising and Harry had to shush him again when Draco turned around to watch them in curiosity.

“B—Because! I...I actually...I love him...” She admitted in soft voice, a blush rushing into her cheeks but Sirius’s eyebrows rose up in confusion, leaning closer so he could hear her better.

“What?! Sorry Harry, I didn’t quite catch that. You’ll have to speak a bit louder.” He replied, bending down so that she could whisper to him. Blushing darker, Harry obliged and leaned forward, whispering the phrase once more into his ear.

When she pulled back, Sirius’ face was flushed pink and he stared at her as though she had admitted to having a crush on Voldemort, his jaw dropping open in disbelief.

“You WHAT?!”

Flinching at his voice, Jaimee looked behind them in embarrassment to find that the Malfoys were all staring at them in confusion – watching as she laughed nervously before turning back around and kicking Sirius sharply in the shin.

He winced but he didn't lower his voice as he shouted again, causing her to jump in surprise. "Are you INSANE?! You—Y—You willingly accepted this marriage?! Wh—Why?! I—it's Malfoy!" He croaked out, grabbing her by the front of her robes and jostling her for an explanation.

It was then that he noticed her attire and he froze again, his eyes darting down to widen at her appearance. "And you're dressed as a woman! Why are you dressed like a woman?! Did he make you do it?! Did he force you to dress like this?!" He demanded, his angry eyes flicking from her wincing face to Draco's angry expression.

"N—No, Sirius! He didn't! I decided this! I—"

"Petrificus Totalus!"

Harry gasped and stepped back in shock as her Godfather's now petrified form fell forward face first onto the floor. As he fell, Jaimee looked up to see Draco stepping up in front of her, a smug smile on his face and his wand held up in his hand.

"There...Now that's taken care of...To more important matters." He drawled, shoving his wand back into his pocket and turning to give Harry an all-too-innocent smile. She cocked an eyebrow as he put an arm around her waist and led her forward right into the battlefield, gesturing first to the familiar blonde man smirking near the Headmaster's table.

"Jaimee, you remember my father – the head of the family – Lucius Malfoy." He began, pushing her gently towards him and she managed a nervous laugh, taking Lucius' offered hand. It looked as though the Malfoy head was bending down to give it a kiss but out of nervousness, Harry shook it firmly instead, forcing Lucius to stop mid-bend and give her a strange look.

"H—Hi Mister Malfoy...H—How are you? I—I h—haven't talked to you since s—second year! Of course back then you were trying to kill me but—Oh! But that's not important!" She suddenly rushed out, silently screaming at herself in her head when she saw the scandalized look on Lucius' face at her senseless rambling.

The Malfoy head dropped her hand and shoved his back into his pocket, the friendly smirk on his face faltering into a forced smile that looked more like a grimace. In her nervousness, Harry forced herself to rant on, trying to salvage the situation.

“I—I mean, it was important! Y—You were trying to kill me but that’s done now with you being a spy and all and well – Anyway! Ehehe! I mean, who hasn’t wanted to kill someone every now and then? I remember how I wanted to kill my godfather’s house-elf, Kreacher loads of times! He’s nothing like Dobby, your house-elf, sir! You remember him! He was yours and...I...freed...him...” Harry’s eyes widened when she realized her own words and her eyes darted to her side, blinking rapidly when she saw Draco cringing and shaking his head frantically at her.

Lucius looked questioningly at Draco and the Malfoy heir gave his father a forced smile, to which Lucius responded to by raising a curious eyebrow. “Charming...” He managed to say, his voice sounding restrained as he turned back to the stuttering Gryffindor.

His eyes looking half-irritated, half-amused, Lucius managed another tight-lipped smile and bowed his head once to her in inclination before taking a step backwards and allowing Draco to move on. Biting his lip, Draco hesitated as he turned her to his Grandfather and he was slightly surprised when he saw the heavy amusement in the older Malfoy’s eyes.

“This is my grandfather, Lawrence Malfoy...Grandfather, I’d like you to meet my fiancé, Jaimee Potter.” He continued, his eyes narrowing in confusion when Lawrence merely nodded his head once as though in recent familiarity. Jaimee smiled back at the man albeit uncertainly, her hands fidgeting nervously behind her back.

“Wait...Have you two already met or something...?” Draco asked as he watched the expressions on their faces, his suspicions rising further when Lawrence merely smiled in response. “Oh I may have come across her face once before...” He drawled and both he and Jaimee left it there, falling into a heavy silence.

When neither of them said anything else, Draco hesitated before he spoke up again and pointed Jaimee in the direction of his grandmother. At the older woman's warm eyes, Jaimee managed a genuine smile this time and Draco didn't even finish his introduction when she already allowed herself to be pulled into a hug, blushing in embarrassment when Genevieve planted a kiss on both her cheeks.

"I think she's absolutely charming, Draco. Not at all like all those superficial, giggly girlfriends you used to have all the time – how many girls did you date again?" She suddenly asked, turning to her embarrassed grandson.

Smirking, Harry turned to the blonde and was surprised to see him sticking his tongue out playfully at his grandmother before answering. "Grandmother, it's just like you to purposely embarrass me like that." He kidded, causing both his grandmother and mother to laugh.

"How many girlfriends did you have, Malfoy?" Harry muttered under her breath at him but Draco just grinned at her and turned away, obviously avoiding her question. Before she could ask him again, he finally turned her to his mother, holding back a laugh when he already noticed her scrutinizing Jaimee's appearance from head to toe.

"Lastly, Jaimee...This is my very beautiful mother, Narcissa. I believe you've already seen each other once at the Quidditch World Cup. Back when – as you say – my father was still trying to 'kill' you." Draco teased, causing Harry to flush and glare warningly at him.

She would have told him off but he had already backed away when Narcissa stepped forward and inspected Jaimee's face up close, raising a single hand and running it disdainfully through the younger girl's hair.

"U—Uhm...It's a p—pleasure to meet you Mrs. Malfoy—"

"Oh! No, no, no, no, no! This absolutely can not do!" The blonde woman exclaimed loudly as she took a step backwards away from her in panic, gesturing wildly to the meek-looking assistant behind her hastily writing down her words.

Confused, Harry raised an eyebrow and turned to look at Draco. The Malfoy heir was biting his lower lip in nervousness and was discreetly trying to back away from her, desperately trying to avoid being seen by his mother.

“Draco, what—?”

“No, no, no, Jaimee! You absolutely should not be seen in public looking like that! This is going to take a lot of work! I’m going to have to contact tailors! Dressmakers! Beauticians! Party planners and caterers! Oh and honey, we have got to do something about those hideous shoes! In fact, I’m taking you to Hogsmeade right now to go shopping!” She rushed out, shaking her head furiously at her panicked assistant.

“Annabelle! Helena! You are both going with us!” Narcissa added after a moment of consideration, turning to the two girls seated beside William and Reggie. As if on cue, the beautiful women seated next to them stood up and walked over to stand behind Jaimee, smiling nervously at the Lady Malfoy in front of them as she barked out more orders to her poor assistant.

“Jaimee, this is Annabelle and Helena. They’re William and Reggie’s fiancés. Don’t worry, we’ll make this a way for us to get to know each other better, won’t we girls?” Narcissa spoke up again, the sharp, business-like brusque of her voice betraying the seemingly inviting implication of her words.

Offering her a weak, friendly smile, the blonde girl Jaimee knew to be Annabelle spoke up, her dainty features looking a bit nervous. “Auntie Narcissa can be scary sometimes...But I guess she means well. The last time she dragged us along a shopping spree, we spent an entire day shopping around London.” She told her, laughing nervously when Helena groaned out loud in agreement.

Jaimee felt all the color drain out of her face when she heard this, looking up and watching in horror as one by one – all the Malfoy males in room began to leave and walk towards the fireplace, more than eager to leave the women alone.

Sensing Narcissa's growing vehemence, both William and Reggie bid their fiancés a goodbye kiss to their cheek before they hastily followed their grandfather and Lucius to the fireplace, disappearing about a second after.

Laughing madly, Byron walked up to Jaimee patted the girl consolingly on her shoulder, leaning down to whisper something briefly in her ear. "I'm sorry but this is something even I can't help you out of, Harry. I'm out of here." He said, giving her a saucy wink before he followed his cousins out the fireplace, leaving Jaimee staring helplessly at his retreating form in growing panic.

Sensing her distraught features, Genevieve walked up to her and gave her a farewell hug, a look of sympathy etched into her face. "I'm sorry, dear...I would love to go with you and keep my young daughter-in-law in check but I'm an old woman, you see... And I can't shop around with you as much as I used to." She said, sighing and patting Jaimee gently on the back.

Giving all three ladies one final smile, she finally turned and followed after her grandsons, leaving Harry staring after her in dismay. "Merlin, help me. I'm going to be dragged around shopping with women all day long...Oh bloody hell..." The soon-to-be Malfoy heiress muttered under her breath, already feeling the beginnings of a nervous breakdown erupting in her chest.

Turning around, she saw Draco hurriedly waving his wand at Sirius' petrified state, causing the marauder to jump to his feet and immediately wrap an arm dangerously around the Malfoy heir's neck.

"Malfoy! I can't believe you petrified me! I am going to snap your neck in half and feed you to a pack of wolves!" He growled out loud, oblivious to the now male-free, half-empty office.

"And of course, we'll need to buy jewelry! And lots and lots of beautiful new skirts and dresses for you! Oh, I'm so excited! I think I'm going to call my personal beauticians already!" Narcissa continued, taking Jaimee by the shoulder and shoving her towards her assistant to take her body measurements.

“D—Did y-you say...beauticians???” She whimpered, turning wide, furious eyes to Draco and Sirius and growing even angrier when she saw both males smiling nervously at her with sheepish expressions on their faces. Sirius still had his arm wrapped tightly around Draco’s neck but his efforts at choking the Malfoy heir had seized and he was now gaping at his cousin as she circled his goddaughter like a hawk about to devour its prey.

“Here’s can idea, Black! You can break my neck all you want...after we get the hell out of here and before my mother drags us along into this. How about it?!” Draco offered nervously, gulping when he saw the look of pure murder on Harry’s face.

Directing a weak, disarming smile at Harry, Sirius’ grip around Draco’s neck loosened and he nodded frantically, the two of them slowly backing away from the growing fire in the black-haired girl’s narrowed green eyes.

“What a wonderful suggestion, Malfoy... I was just thinking the same thing.” Sirius agreed, his voice shaking slightly as his eyes darted repeatedly from Harry’s face to the door behind them.

“OH NO YOU DON’T, YOU TWO! DON’T YOU DARE—”

“You run first, I’ll pretend to chase!” Sirius rushed out to Draco, shoving the blonde towards the door. Not one to disagree with that, Draco turned and bolted noisily for the door with Sirius right at his heels, both men crying out in pain when Harry’s sneakers came flying at their heads.

Narcissa was still rushing out orders to her secretary and failed to notice all this happening behind her, turning to give the three girls a speculative look. “Hmm...Oh, schedule a full body wax for three as well. I believe all of them would appreciate it for tomorrow’s party.” She told her assistant, failing to notice the looks of horror both Annabelle and Helena shot at Harry.

Terrified, the boy-turned-girl shot a horror-stricken back to the closed entrance door and screamed at the top of her lungs, her voice



echoing down the long Hogwarts corridor through which two men – one blonde, one black-haired – were running for their lives.

“DRACO MALFOY! SIRIUS BLACK! I AM GOING TO KILL YOU BOTH!”

Ugh...I hope it rains so I won't have to have a picnic with that arrogant, pureblooded prat. Lorraine thought moodily as she waited outside for her family near the entrance of the castle, looking up at the sky with a scowl on her face. Crossing her arms over her chest, she sighed and leaned back against the door behind her, checking her watch and noting that it was exactly around fifteen minutes before Philippe would be there to pick her up for their picnic.

She knew her family had come to Hogwarts after hearing news of Draco's engagement to Jaimee and though she was more than thrilled for him, she had been reluctant to return to Hogwarts with them. Sure enough, her Grandfather had persuaded her to come along and had even managed to arrange for her and Philippe to have a picnic near the grounds afterwards.

Instead of following her family inside the Headmaster's office, she chose to wait outside and sulk – glaring unhappily at all the other Hogwartian debutantes hanging out by the lake's edge. Shaking her head, she turned around and was about to walk back into the castle when a familiar voice behind her spoke up, causing her to freeze in shock.

“Lorraine...? Is that you?”

Tense with anticipation, she turned slowly and inwardly groaned when she saw Ron's blue eyes staring back at her as he walked up the steps towards the entrance. Several other Gryffindor boys were behind him and they watched curiously as the redhead stopped in front of her, giving her a small, disarming smile.

She glared back at him, her eyes narrowing icily in anger but he simply smiled and gestured for his friends to go on ahead without him, turning back to give her an unreadable look.

Neither of them said anything for a long time.

Ron's eyes dropped down and he shoved his hands into his pockets, shuffling his feet nervously on the ground. Lorraine wasn't any better off as she looked away from him and wrapped her arms around herself, shivering slightly at the cold air around them.

Noticing this, Ron's lips quirked into a weak smile and he shrugged his thick jacket off, offering it up to her in silence. She glared at him, refusing to take his jacket until he sighed and slung it over his arm, walking over so that they were standing face to face.

"Look...I'm glad you came back here. There's—"

"I didn't come back. My family just came here to talk to Draco about his engagement. Besides, I'm supposed to be meeting Philippe here in awhile for a picnic so you may want to salvage your ego by ignoring me and walking away." She said snidely, causing Ron to wince at the harshness of her tone.

Managing a weak grin, he lifted one shoulder up in a half-shrug, looking half-amused and half-nervous at her words. "I guess I deserved that one..." He mused, ducking his head sheepishly behind his hand.

Rolling her eyes, Lorraine let out a heavy sigh and straightened up from the wall, wrapping her arms around herself and giving him a suspicious glare. "What do you want, Ron? Do you want me to say I forgive you so you can leave me alone? Okay. 'I forgive you'. Now go." She snapped, turning around and making to walk back in the castle but Ron placed a hand on her shoulder and held her back, a pleading look on his face.

"Please, Raine! I'm sorry, alright? I was wrong! I said a lot of awful things about you that I shouldn't have and I'm so sorry! Just...Tell me what I have to do to make things alright between us again and I'll do

it! Please!” He rushed out, his hand moving downwards to clasp hers, squeezing her fingers gently with his.

In spite of herself, Lorraine stood perfectly still and listened to him, keeping her face guarded carefully lest her emotions showed on her features. Ron stepped closer to her, a heavy sigh escaping his lips as he ran his hand furiously through his tousled red hair.

“Look...I’m not very good with apologies. All you have to know is that I’m a very...very insecure person, alright? I’ve been best friends with Harry Potter for seven years, you have to understand that! I’m sorry... I shouldn’t have taken it out on you.” He explained further, looking up into her face and watching the emotions in her eyes.

She blinked up at him in uncertainty and forced herself to look away, her bottom lip making its way between her teeth in thought. He took this as a refusal and continued, his voice sounding more and more desperate as he spoke.

“I’ll do anything, Raine. I’ll do anything for you to forgive me...Alright? I’m sorry I called you materialistic, I’m sorry I called you a monster, I’m sorry for everything! What can I do for you to forgive me?” He demanded, placing both his hands on her shoulders and jostling her gently for an answer.

A bitter laugh escaped her lips as she angrily shrugged his hands off her shoulders, finally meeting his eyes with a hard glare. “I’ll forgive you when you can make it rain, Weasley.” She hissed at him, shoving him away from her and heading back towards the castle.

“B—But that’s impossible—”

“Exactly.” She cut him off sharply, her heels clacking noisily against the stone floor as she walked away from him.

To her surprise, however, he didn’t seem to be following after her as she expected. Just as she reached the front doors, she whirled around in mild curiosity, her eyes widening when she beheld the scene before her.

Where she had stood near the steps, Ron was now hopping up and down on one foot and holding his hands up high over his head in an awkward position, a speculative look on his face as he looked up into the sky with fierce determination in his eyes.

One of her eyebrows raised higher than the other, Lorraine stared at him in speechless stupor as she stood rooted in her place. She watched with reluctant smile as he began humming an indistinct tune under his breath and he began hopping in a small circle while holding his position, ignoring the strange looks he was receiving from many of his fellow students.

After a few awkward minutes of watching him continue this, she finally couldn't take it anymore and approached him cautiously, fighting the laugh that was threatening to spill from her lips.

"Er...Ron...? What are you doing...?"

Jumping slightly in surprise, he whirled around and gave her a mischievous grin before hopping up on one leg again and resuming his bizarre activity.

"I'm doing the rain dance, Lorraine. What do you think I'm doing?" He answered easily, giving her another smile before turning around again, raising his arms up higher above his head.

She stared at him for another long moment of stunned silence, watching in helpless amusement as he pranced around her like a humming lunatic with an infectious grin on his face. Finally, after what seemed like hours of her speechless staring, she finally caved in and clamped a hand over her mouth, muffling the giggles that were threatening to escape.

Failing to notice this, Ron continued his deranged dance and began to hum louder, switching his hopping leg before resuming his movements. In spite of her efforts, Lorraine couldn't help herself and her lips began twitching madly in laughter, her giggles growing louder and more uncontrollable.

Hearing this, Ron stopped immediately and turned around, smiling when he saw Lorraine laughing genuinely for the first time in months. She was covering her mouth to restrain herself but that proved useless as he winked at her before resuming his dance, causing her to laugh harder.

After about three more minutes of this, he finally stopped and joined her laughter, walking up to the giggling girl and wrapping his arms around her to pull her close to chest. They both laughed against each other softly, his fingers going to caress the smooth strands of her hair.

“I’m sorry...” He whispered, leaning down and kissing the top of her head. Allowing a genuine smile to grace her face, she looked up at him and pressed her lips very gently against his, causing a faint blush to color Ron’s cheeks.

Pulling away about a second later, she giggled again when she saw the flushed, sputtering expression on his face. Feeling a little mischievous, she reached up and poked the bridge of his nose, forcing him back to his senses as he blinked and stared down at her in amazement.

Seeing the teasing sparkle in her eyes, he smiled back and he would have leaned down to kiss her again when they both heard a faint rumble above them, causing both teenagers to glance up in surprise just in time to see dark, gray rain clouds beginning to darken the skies.

Lorraine had just raised an eyebrow at Ron in amazement right before they both cringed as rain began to pour down on them, drenching them both with big, cold raindrops. He began to laugh again as he looked down into her beautiful smile, blushing when she reached a hand up and pushed his drenched bangs away from his eyes.

“You’re such an idiot, Weasley...”

When he couldn’t force himself to say anything, he reached up and cupped her cheek instead – the both of them ignoring the screaming

students passing them as they ran back into the Hogwarts castle to avoid being drenched from the rain.

Pulling away to place his jacket over her shivering form, he pulled her closer against him and wrapped his arms around her waist, their bodies melting against each other under the pouring rain.

"I think...I'm in love with you, Lorraine..." He whispered into her ear and he immediately felt her shoulders tense as she pulled back and stared wordlessly up at him, her jaw hanging open in shock.

"Wh—What? Ron, I—"

"Shhh... I know. You don't have to say anything right now. Please." He whispered gently, his voice muffled into her hair. She nodded wordlessly, hugging him tighter and sighing when she felt a warm, fuzzy feeling of immense happiness bursting from her chest.

They stayed in that position for a long moment, relishing in the warmth seeping from the other's body until a familiar, mocking voice eventually broke them out of their trance, causing both teenagers to stiffen in panic.

"Well, well... Lorraine...? I expected more from my fiancé than this..."

Gulping, she tore herself from Ron's embrace and found herself staring right into the face of a very angry looking Philippe and an equally irate Draco behind him. The two pureblooded males were glaring accusingly at her with narrowed eyes – Philippe with anger and Draco with disappointment.

Paling in fear, she took a step backwards and offered both men a nervous smile.

Now what...?

A/N: I apologize but I found that this was probably the best place to end this chapter since it was hellish long already. :giggles: A little

Ron/Lorraine action in this one since most of you have been asking about them for a while now. Before I forget, thanks to all those who reviewed my last chapter! I especially want to thank those who left long reviews. You have no idea how much you all inspire me to keep writing this story. I'm glad you all enjoy it and I hope you'll all keep reading even when I start on its sequel. :wink:

Next Chapter: More Malfoys, Auror training, The Engagement Party

PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO REVIEW AND HELP ME OUT!  
MWAH! CHEERS!

## Chapter 27 – Moving Forward

Harry grunted as she hoisted herself up a couple more times from the floor in her nighttime push-up routines, her legs stretched out and resting on top of the end of her bed. Right across the room, Neville looked up from his Arithmancy book and shook his head at her in amazement, watching the Gryffindor wincing as she paused to wipe the sweat off her brow.

“Honestly, Harry...You do about fifty push-ups every night and about fifty again every morning. Don't you ever tire yourself out with these exercise routines of yours?” He asked, chuckling as Harry finally ended her fiftieth push-up and collapsed onto the floor in exhaustion.

From his bed, Ron opened one bleary eye and glanced at his best friend, yawning loudly as he turned to face her. “Yeah, mate. Most women would be applying all those green goo and creams on their faces at night right? I see Fleur and Ginny do it all the time at home.” He commented idly, rolling his eyes when he saw Dean and Seamus cuddling each other on the bed across him.

Shooting him a disarming grin, Harry shrugged as she jumped back up and collapsed onto her bed, reaching for her water and taking a long, satisfying swig. “I guess they do but I can't afford to waste time on that. My Auror qualifying exam is next week, I have to shape up more than ever. Which reminds me, aren't you taking it too, Neville?” She asked, turning to her friend's embarrassed face.

“O—Oh! Well, I can't expect to be anywhere near the rank you'll probably receive, Harry! But yeah, I'll be taking it too. I've always wanted to become an Auror after I graduate.” He told her, drawing Seamus' attention to their conversation.

The Irish boy looked up from the Muggle Studies book he had been peering at over Dean's shoulder and glanced up at them, a curious grin on his face. “Speaking of graduation, I hear your boyfriend is in running to be Valedictorian of our batch this year. Where's that bugger going to work after Hogwarts anyways?” He asked, turning his attention to Harry.



At the word 'boyfriend', she blushed and hastily avoided Seamus' teasing smirk, leaning back down to rest her head against her pillow.

"Where else? Lucius is already preparing him to take over as president and CEO of their multinational company, MMC. Draco's really excited about it too. He's been taking a lot of extra classes this year about investment relations and corporate strategies." She grumbled in disinterest, yawning loudly and turning to rest her cheek against her pillowcase.

Dean shook his head after hearing this, closing his Muggle Studies book shut and leaning back down against Seamus' bed to stare dreamily up at the ceiling. "Man...It must be so wicked to just have everything laid out for you like that. The minute you graduate, you have this entire corporation handed right to you on a silver platter. It must be something..." He mused out loud, unaware of the bitter scowl that appeared on Ron's face.

"Yeah...Malfoy has everything laid out for him. The rest of us peasants on the other hand need to work hard to be acknowledged by everyone else. It isn't easy being in a middle-class pureblooded family like mine." He muttered, burying his face into his pillow when Harry turned to give him a sympathetic smile.

"I take it things aren't going so well with Lorraine, are they? Have you talked to her since yesterday?" She asked gently, shifting over to her side so that she was lying down facing the redhead's bed.

Ron sighed and shook his head, sitting back up and running a hand through his disheveled hair. "Not at all. After her stupid fiancé caught us hugging under the rain, he dragged her back to France and Malfoy had Crabbe and Goyle dump me into the lake for even suggesting that I be given a chance to court her." He told her, causing Harry to cringe at the thought.

Sensing her best friend's defeated stance, she sat back up on the bed and hugged her legs to her chest, smiling inwardly when she saw that Neville, Dean and Seamus had all sat up as well and were listening to Ron in concerned silence.

“Why don’t you write to her, mate? Ask her how she feels about all this. Maybe she’s willing to work with you and ditch her rich, bloody handsome fiancé. He has got great arms, by the way.” Seamus quipped with a grin and a half-hearted shrug, causing both Harry and Dean to shoot him an admonishing glare at his words.

To their surprise, Ron laughed helplessly and shook his head, keeling backwards and falling back onto his pillows. “I did write to her but she hasn’t answered my letters yet. I feel like such an idiot. I can’t believe I actually thought I had a chance! She’s completely out of my league, she’s—”

“Ron, don’t say that, okay? Stop putting yourself down!” Harry suddenly snapped, jumping out of her bed and hopping beside him to sling an arm around his shoulders. “You’re coming with me to the bloody engagement party on Friday, right? I’m sure she’s going to be there so maybe—”

“Speaking of which, Harry...Do we really have to go to this thing? I mean...The invitations alone are scaring me.” Neville suddenly spoke up, drawing her attention by holding up a white and green colored, glossy card into the light.

Groaning in agreement, the others pulled out their own invitations as well – glancing uncertainly at the details written in elegant, expensive lettering. “He’s got a point, Harry. I mean, what do we even wear to this thing? It says here that the attire is formal and that the party is RSVP. What does that even mean? RSVP?” Dean added, squinting at his invitation in thought.

Managing a bitter laugh, Harry stood up and walked back over to her bed, sitting down on the edge Indian-style. “RSVP is...’Répondez s’il vous plaît’. It means ‘respond if you please’ meaning you have to confirm your attendance.” She told them, much to Ron’s shock as he whirled around to give her a questioning look.

“How do you even know that?!” He demanded, snorting in disbelief.

Glaring at him, she rolled her eyes before haphazardly tossing her blanket up over head to hide her face. “I asked Narcissa the same

question yesterday while I waiting five bloody hours of torture in the spa to get my bloody toenails painted green! Why do women even need to paint their nails anyway? I mean, the damn things are going to grow again anyway – why bother?!” She ranted angrily, causing the boys around her to snigger in agreement.

“Boy, you sure got in way over your head by agreeing to marry Malfoy, Harry...How does it feel now? Caught in the pressure of everything, I mean...?” Neville asked casually, shifting his position so that his lower body was now buried deep under his covers.

Unsure of what to say, Harry blinked and forced out a laugh before answering. “To be honest, Neville...It feels like shit. Just yesterday, his mother was telling me about how all the Malfoys will be at the engagement party and about how it was so exclusive that they had to handpick special reporters and photographers to be present there for the newspapers the next day. It’s all a bit too much for me to take in all at once.” She admitted, her voice shaking slightly as she spoke.

Giving the girl a sympathetic look, Ron reached up and tossed a pillow playfully at her head to catch her attention, smiling when Harry rolled her eyes at him and tossed the pillow right back. “So just break up with the bastard and help me get revenge. He’s probably one of the reasons Lorraine can’t talk to me, maybe I can blackmail him somehow using you.” Ron joked weakly, causing the other boys to laugh and Harry to give him reluctant smile

“I don’t do blackmail, Weasley. Try murder though, I’d be more than happy to kill Draco for you especially after the horrible agony he forced me to go through with his mother. Honestly, how many pairs of shoes and dresses does a woman need to have?!” She growled, gesturing angrily to the hordes of shopping bags and boxes scattered around the room.

Wincing as he eyed them, Dean shook his head and gave her a pointed look. “Nothing against you Harry but you’re going to have to move these things around tomorrow. We can’t have stuff like these—” He stopped and bent down to pick up the contents of a small bag near his bed, holding it up to the light for them to see.

“—lacy panties—scattered about the room. It’s bad for our masculinity.” He told her and Harry scoffed at this, rolling her eyes before falling back against her bed.

“You’re gay, Dean. How much ‘masculinity’ can you possibly still need to reinforce? Besides, I don’t intend to wear those so you can throw those away.” She muttered, burying her face sleepily into her pillow to muffle her yawn.

Laughing at her quip, Ron followed her lead and buried his face under his pillow as well, reaching a hand up blindly to dim the lights around his bed. “She has a good point there, Dean. Besides, leave them alone. Since when do we have any other excuse to have stuff like that in our room?” He droned sleepily, failing to see Dean’s disgruntled look as he tossed the panties back to Seamus.

“I’m not gay! I’m bisexual!” He grumbled, rolling his eyes as Seamus raised the underwear up to his eyes with a perverted grin on his face. “Hey Harry...Will you wear this for us sometime? You know...You wouldn’t want your expensive body wax to go to waste, right?” He urged, causing Neville, Ron and Dean to wince at the painful image.

The Irish Gryffindor was answered by a pillow to his face. Harry growled and tossed the blankets over her head, grumbling over the much-hated memory. “You shouldn’t make fun of other people’s pain, Finnegan. How would you like it if I waved the hair off your head?! And I don’t mean the upper one either!” She snapped, causing Seamus’ cheeks to flush in panic.

Ron and Neville laughed while Dean smirked, watching as Seamus swallowed nervously and set the underwear back in its bag. Giving Harry an innocent smile, he hastily tucked himself back into his covers and pulled the blankets up to his chin.

Shaking her head, Harry rolled over onto her stomach and was about to close her eyes when Ron spoke up again, his voice muffled slightly by his pillow. “By the way mate...Isn’t Malfoy a little uncomfortable with this arrangement? You know...About you sharing a dormitory with us? It is kind of socially unacceptable—”

“Screw him! I’m staying right where I am. I like it here with you guys and whether he hates it or not, I’m not moving.” She cut him off before he finished, shivering and yanking her blankets tighter around her thoroughly waxed, aching body.

“Harry...” Neville began uncertainly, waiting until Harry opened her eyes before he continued to speak. “Can I ask you for some advice? I mean...On relationships? It’s about Luna...” He explained and almost immediately, everyone’s ears perked and they sat up to listen.

“Shag her yet, Neville?! It’s about time you got yourself laid—”

Dean elbowed his boyfriend sharply in the ribs to shut up, causing Seamus to scowl and give him a displeased pout. Muffling another yawn, Harry forced herself to sit back up and blink sleepily at the other Gryffindor. She raised an eyebrow and nodded, waiting for him to continue.

Neville had blushed at Seamus’ comment and chose to ignore it, turning instead to give Harry a smile. “Well...I’ve already settled plans for our engagement and Luna tells me she’s more than happy about everything. However...There’s one thing bothering me.” He sighed, setting his books back on the bedside table.

Again, Harry nodded sleepily and gestured for him to keep talking. “Well...You know that Luna is a very intelligent girl, right? She’s one of the highest in her house! And, well...She told me that once we got married, she’d be willing to drop her career plans to be a housewife for me.” He finished, looking dismayed as he waited for Harry’s reaction.

Sensing the other boys’ confusion, Neville opened his mouth to speak again but Ron beat him to it, his voice sounding incredulous with disbelief. “So...? What’s so wrong about that, Neville? Isn’t that something you should appreciate from her? She’s willing to be a full-time wife! That’s great news!” He rushed out but Neville winced and shook his head, the expression on his face one of disappointment.

“Before we got engaged, Luna was always talking about how she wanted to work as a curator for the Magical Artifacts Museum in

London! To have her give up her dream like that for me is...It's wrong! I never wanted her to do that, I never needed her to be a housewife!" He exclaimed, turning back to meet Harry's solemn gaze.

Sighing, the black-haired girl slowly lay back down on her back and looked up at the ceiling with a thoughtful expression on her face. "Yes...Neville's right. A woman shouldn't have to give up her dream like that just to marry someone she loves. Lately, I've gotten the impression from Narcissa that she expects me to be the next Lady Malfoy and give up my dream for their family." She admitted softly, causing her friends to look at her in concern.

"What did Malfoy say—"

"I haven't talked to Draco about it yet and frankly, I'm not ready to. Right now, I have to focus on surviving my engagement and passing my qualifying exam." She cut Ron off before he could ask her the question she's been avoiding for awhile now and turned to her bedside table to switch off her lamp.

"Neville, I think you're right. Luna should be given the chance to work for herself. I'm sorry I can't say more but I'm turning in for tonight, guys. Good night. See you tomorrow." She murmured, sighing heavily as she shut her eyes in exhaustion.

"Good night, Mrs. Malfoy." Ron, Seamus, Dean and Neville all teased, bursting out into simultaneous sniggers when they were answered by a sleepy Harry raising her hand up and flashing them a very rude finger.

"Mrs. Malfoy! That's not very proper!" Seamus teased further, hurling a pillow at Harry's sleeping form and causing her to growl in annoyance.

"Leave me alone!"

That same night in the Slytherin Common Room, Draco sat in the middle of the supposed 'surprise Stag party' his housemates had thrown for him and watched with a smirk as Crabbe and Goyle walked into the room carrying boxes of liquor on their shoulders.

His friends cheered loudly and Theodore Nott immediately dove into the box, helping himself to a bottle of tequila. Beside him, Blaise chuckled and summoned a bottle of firewhiskey into his hand. After pouring himself a glass, he offered one to Draco who refused, shaking his head in decline.

The Italian heir rolled his eyes, taking a long sip. "Always the proper student are you, Drac?" He commented, watching as Draco's cousins – Byron, Reggie and William – walked into the common room and was greeted by several cheers and handshakes from their other housemates.

Following them were several others of Draco's non-Hogwartian friends – Philippe Winchester, Oswald Cunningham and Edward Haskins walked in carrying several more cases of expensive wine and liquor, causing more cheers from the Slytherin males around the room.

Shrugging, Draco took a sip of butterbeer and set his bottle down to give Blaise a superior smile. "My Corporate Management elective exam is tomorrow morning. I don't want to mess it up because you guys decided to accost me in the middle of the hall and drag me into this." He drawled, his eyes inspecting the room in mild curiosity.

Blaise grinned, nodding in greeting as more pureblooded family heirs they knew walked past them and started mingling around the room. "Well you were being chased by Black weren't you? This must be better than having to run for your life again for another night." He pointed out and at this, Draco turned and gave him a scoff.

"Yes, and whereas I was once being chased by a man drunk with murder I am now in a room with men drunk with liquor. I feel so much better." He mocked loudly, causing Blaise to laugh at his best friend's sarcastic wit.

Having heard that, Goyle surged forward and slung an arm drunkenly around Draco's shoulders. "Aw come on, Malfoy! Don't be like shhat! Ain't you touched—ed?! We guys shhhrew this party shhpifically for yeh! Because you—you rock!" He slurred and at the four smell of

vodka coming from his breath, Draco shoved the larger Slytherin away in annoyance.

“Yes...I’m moved to tears, Goyle. Especially if you keep pointing that nasty breath of yours near me.” He said out loud, causing some of the others to laugh as Goyle smirked good-naturedly and slinked back to their other year mates – managing to bump into several more students as he walked past them.

Feigning a sigh, Blaise shook his head at Draco as he took another sip of butterbeer. He was about to shove a bottle of vodka toward the blonde when they were both greeted by Philippe as he took the empty lush armchair next to them, giving both pureblooded heirs a customary handshake.

“Hey Malfoy. Zabini. Your little stag party seems to be missing something isn’t it?” He drawled, smirking pointedly at them before taking a sip of his bottle of tequila. Pretending to look confused, Blaise raised an eyebrow and watched Philippe gesture around the room in dismay.

“The ladies, Malfoy! Where are the ladies?! I’ve never been to a stag party but isn’t it supposed to have half-naked, dancing women?” He pointed out, sighing in exasperation. Draco chuckled and turned to Blaise, giving the other Slytherin a questioning glance.

“Don’t look at me, Winchester. Zabini and the others planned this, not me. Although personally, I’m quite alright. I don’t need women parading about their bits in front of my face.” He added as an afterthought, taking another sip of his drink.

Philippe directed his look to Blaise and the black-haired Slytherin just shrugged, giving him a disarming smile.

“You’re thinking more of the American bachelor party, Winchester. I don’t know about women... Nott took care of that department but I hear he was all about following the American tradition of alcohol and women for this party too. All I was responsible for was the liquor and getting Draco here despite his many protests of needing to sleep



early for tomorrow's 'exam'." He kidded, punching the Malfoy heir on the shoulder.

Hearing this, Philippe grunted and let out a derisive scoff. "Ugh. Malfoy, you are the most boring person in the world. What's the use of being bloody rich and sought after if you're not going to be a little reckless once in a while?" He drawled, causing Draco to roll his eyes in annoyance.

"I'd prefer the term 'responsible', Winchester. Unlike you who seems to thrive on getting as much dirt as humanely possible on his family name in nearly all the gossip tabloids." He retorted, causing Philippe to scoff and take sip of his drink.

Blaise watched this exchange in amusement, his eyes flicking back and forth between the two men in silence. Just as he was going to tease Draco further, Byron and Reggie Malfoy sat down beside them and set their drinks down onto the table.

"Hey Big D! Congratulations! You caught the prime catch of this season! I'm so proud of you!" Byron mock gushed, reaching over and giving his cousin a light punch to the shoulder. Draco looked slightly irritated but nodded nonetheless, declining another offer of firewhiskey from Reggie.

Smiling at his older cousin's rigid stance, Reggie raised the bottle to his lips and took a small sip. "Ah, right...Midterms huh? I hear Uncle Lucius is already showing you the ropes on everything inside MMC. How goes that?" He asked, his eyes turning to watch several Slytherin sixth years drunkenly cheering and playing poker amongst themselves in the corner of the room.

Draco grinned and nodded, shaking his head once more when Byron offered him from the bowl of chips he had in his hand. "Yeah, he has. I'm actually excited to start. He's even offered to take me to a business conference in Italy next week after midterms so I'll be missing some classes." He told them, much to Blaise's surprise.

"You'll be gone for an entire week? What about the Quidditch rematch against Gryffindor? You can't just—"

“Relax, Zabini. That’s on Saturday right? I’ll back in time for that. Which reminds me, I haven’t even told Potter yet that I’ll be gone.” Draco mused, dreading the idea of being separated from her – even if it was just for one week.

“Speaking of your hot fiancé, isn’t she friends with that loser I caught Lorraine with yesterday? What was his name, Wesley? Can you tell her to tell him that he should keep his bloody hands to himself?! I don’t need some slobbering runt touching my woman—”

“It’s Weasley and he means her no harm. In fact, in all honesty, I actually think that he genuinely likes Lorraine even after Draco here had him dumped into the lake yesterday.” Blaise interrupted with a chuckle, smirking when Philippe turned to glare angrily at him.

“It’s not funny, Zabini! Because of that little stunt, I owed my father last night. I asked him to finalize the documents and procedures in order to legally complete this engagement. I think I’ve bid my courtship period long enough.” He muttered impatiently, much to Byron’s annoyance.

“Lorraine would probably appreciate that a bit more if you’d follow those documents and stop slobbering over other men’s women.” Byron interrupted coldly, turning an icy gaze to Philippe as the other men around them fell into an awkward silence.

Sensing the Malfoy’s anger, Philippe raised an eyebrow and turned to smile politely at him. “I’m not quite sure I understand where you’re getting at, Byron. I thought I told you that those gossip tabloids were spreading rumors about me! That’s all!” He growled but this time, Reggie spoke up – drawing Philippe’s attention to his angry glare.

“Byron’s right, Philippe. You were accused of having an illicit affair with Preston Skeffington’s fiancé last week! There was even a photograph of you two seen together, how can you deny that?! You’re engaged to Lorraine, you’d better damn well take care of her—” Reggie was cut off when Draco finally spoke up, silencing their arguments.

“Reggie, calm down. I’m sure Philippe has a rational explanation as to why he was with that brainless chit and he will tell us right now.” The Head Boy drawled, turning calculating silver eyes to Philippe and watching the other bachelor shift uncomfortably in his seat.

Coughing, he looked up and met Draco’s calm gaze – choosing to ignore Byron’s deadly eyes beside him. “She’s a childhood friend of mine, alright? I was accompanying her to the theater, that’s all. I would never betray your family like that, Drac. I swear.” He rushed out, wincing when Byron exploded beside him.

“Rubbish! I ought to tell Lorraine right now and break off your engagement! I’m not about to let my cousin marry a sleaze like you.” The metamorphagus growled, his golden brown eyes suddenly changing to an angry shade of red.

He stood up, ready to wring his hands around Philippe’s neck but Draco stopped him with a single gesture of his hand, indicating for him to sit back down.

“Draco, are you serious?! You can’t just let him—”

“I know that he’s lying. I’m not stupid, Byron. But I also know that once Grandfather sets his mind to it, he won’t agree to cancel Lorraine’s engagement to him at the last minute so it’s useless trying to choke each other out of it.” He told them calmly, turning to level Philippe with a warning look.

The brown-haired bachelor smiled nervously at him and nodded his agreement, knowing full well that though Draco was known to be calm and controlled most of the time, the minute he blew up – he was like a nuclear bomb that set off everything else around him.

“I understand, Malfoy. No more playing around, I got that.” He promised hastily, holding his hands up in mock-surrender at the others. Blaise snorted in disbelief but neither of them bothered saying anything else about the issue as they all seemed to take a sudden interest in their drinks.

More than eager to get the spotlight off himself, Philippe turned to Blaise and raised an eyebrow in query. "So...Zabini. I hear around here that you've been making some advances on a muggleborn debutante. Is that true?" He asked, laughing in disbelief and failing to notice how Blaise's shoulders had stiffened in anger.

"So what if I am...?" He growled out through clenched teeth, ignoring the quelling looks Draco was trying to give him. Byron and Reggie looked on in mild curiosity, unaware of what they were talking about.

"You guys haven't heard? I'm sure your Uncle Giovanni would be happy to hear that! Wasn't the Zabini family the one with the history of executing muggleborns in the eighteenth century?" He continued, oblivious to the way Blaise's hand was now gripping his bottle very tightly in growing fury.

"Winchester, I suggest you shove your bottle of tequila into your trap before Zabini here does it for you. I can't say I'm not interested in watching, though. I've always thought you had a rather big mouth." Byron drawled in amusement, causing a snort of laughter from Reggie.

"You know nothing about Hermione! You son of a bitch—"

"Byron! I heard William and Reggie have already introduced their fiancés for the season. How goes your hunting?" Draco piped up with a smirk, purposely interrupting his best friend's angry retort. Irritated at Draco's distraction ploy, Blaise washed down the stream of curses threatening to erupt from his mouth with a long swig of firewhiskey.

Grinning sheepishly, he ducked his head behind his head and feigned a look of dismay. "I'm honestly losing all hope of finding a woman like Jaimee, Big D. How about doing me a favor and sharing her with me instead? That sweet face and gorgeous body has ruined me for life!" He teased and at his words, Draco's jaw tightened in irritation.

"Drop dead, Byron."

He laughed and flashed Reggie a wink but the other Malfoy rolled his eyes and sighed. "Well, no matter. I'll have to search more through

wonderful ladies out there to find a worthy bride. I'm sure it'll be easier to catch one since the most sought after Malfoy cousin is finally off the availability list." Byron mused out loud, causing Draco to laugh in spite of himself.

"Of course you'll still have to compete with Anton for a good woman. How is the veela jerk? I haven't been seeing him around lately." Blaise asked and Draco immediately tensed, his eyes narrowing in annoyance.

Byron shook his head and gave them a reassuring smile. "He's fine. He's back in France spending some time with Aunt Lizette and Grandmother. They've had a long talk with him after his fight with Jaimee and believe it or not, he's been a lot nicer to talk to since then. He's still an arse of course but nicer than Draco, obviously." He added, earning himself a very dangerous glare from the Malfoy heir.

Reggie nodded and turned to give Draco a small smile. "He's right, Drac. Anton is a bit nicer than before. I saw him yesterday with grandmother. He was accompanying her to see the Russian Ballet and she looked really happy." He added but Draco just raised an eyebrow, refusing to say anything else.

Fortunately for them, Philippe chose that moment to speak up again and this time, he aimed his comment directly at Draco. "So, Drac...What's the plan after the wedding? Will your fiancé be willing to play trophy wife and stay at home all day for you?" He asked bluntly, causing Draco to wince at the idea.

Gritting his teeth, he forced himself to answer. "No, she won't be. Frankly, I don't want her to. She wants to work as an Auror for the Ministry of Magic and I fully support her decision—"

"Are you crazy?! An Auror?! Do you have any idea of the hours of training that will take? The late nights? The long shifts? Are you sure you want to let her do that?!" Philippe exclaimed, earning himself a warning look from both Blaise and Byron.

Draco clenched his fists and struggled to keep a hold on his anger when he answered. "That doesn't matter. If that's what makes her

happy, then I'm not going to stop her. It was my fault anyway that she has to live the rest of her life as a female and I'm—"

"You're what? Willing to be the one who has to take care of the kids once you have them? Aurors have a very hectic schedule, you know. They could get called in to the office at almost any time. Plus, won't it suck when you're trying to get her into bed with you and she has to work on a case?" Philippe scoffed, causing all the color to drain out of Draco's face in realization.

When the Malfoy heir seemed too shocked to say anything in response, Blaise finally spoke up and drew Philippe's attention back to him. "Philippe, leave Draco alone. He has the right to decide that for himself, stay out of it." He said evenly and at that, Philippe finally shrugged it off and reached for another bottle of tequila.

"I was just raising some important concerns as a friend. Oh yeah...Speaking of friends, how is that lovely creature you're always bringing to parties, Byron? Ada Parker? She's your best friend, right? I have yet to meet her." Philippe realized, turning to give Byron a smile.

Byron looked murderous, however, and narrowed his eyes at him in disgust. "I wouldn't introduce you to Ada if my life depended on it, Winchester. Back off, she's off-limits." He snapped, oblivious to the hand Reggie had placed on his shoulder to keep him in his seat.

Draco didn't hear any of this, however, as he kept his dazed eyes trained on his bottle of butterbeer in silence. Philippe's words rang clearly in his head and to be honest, he wasn't so sure anymore if he was making the right decision in letting Harry choose her own career without the two of them talking it over thoroughly.

Maybe Philippe had made a valid point. Being an Auror would inevitably cause them both to give up considerable time with each other in the future. Undoubtedly, it would cause several arguments between the two of them as well when she had to leave unexpectedly all the time.

Would I be ready to go through that? Draco asked himself, taking a deep breath and barely registering the fact a group of rowdy Slytherin sixth years had jumped onto their table and began to do a drunken dance, causing the other bachelors around them to laugh in amusement.

Around him, he caught the loud beats and tunes of upbeat music being played as more and more drunkards began to cheer and jump around the room – most of them circling around him and giving him a slurred ‘Congrasshhulazions...Mah-foy’ complete with a matching punch to his shoulder.

Blinking distractedly, he watched with a blank stare as a drunk Theodore Nott had rushed to him and placed a huge king’s crown on his head while several more younger years began throwing streamers and confetti all over him, cheering loudly as the music began to blare louder.

“I guess the erotic dancer Nott hired is here. I wonder how he got this one around Dumbledore and Snape.” Blaise shouted above the music to Byron, shaking his head in amusement as the other Slytherins began to make space in the middle of the room.

Reggie placed his hands over his ears and shouted back to him, cringing at the noise. “How can you have music this loud? Aren’t the girls getting angry downstairs? You do have exams tomorrow morning right?” He asked but Blaise grinned and shook his head.

“Never underestimate the power of several silencing charms and a few locking charms to keep the girls out. Besides, I think Dumbledore knew about this and he was all up for it. Heck, the old bat looked happy when he heard of Draco’s engagement to Potter. He was even the one who suggested taking an American-themed party instead of the usual traditional one.” He mused, his voice slightly muffled by the loud music.

Philippe, however, had visibly brightened up and he leaned back in his seat with a smile. “Now this is more like it. You have to love American culture.” He drawled out loud, grinning wider when a cloak

wrapped figure walked to the very center of the room to stop directly in front of Draco.

Reggie looked horrified at the events and was trying to cower backwards to a more secluded area of the room but Byron grinned and kept him firmly in his place. "Come on, Reggie! This is our first American-themed stag party! Besides, we're right beside Draco – we have the best view!" He exclaimed, struggling to keep a wincing Reggie in his seat.

Laughing at the situation and at the whistling Slytherin males cheering around the room, William broke away from his group of friends and sat down beside Philippe, his eyes darting to the cloak-clad figure in front of Draco.

Draco had set his bottle of butterbeer down on the table and was now staring up at the cloaked figure in slight confusion, blinking and looking around the room in question. "Why is everyone cheering? What's happening? And since when did that music become so damn loud?! The professors might come in here and suspend us!" He complained, earning himself several 'boos' from his housemates.

The Head Boy felt his left eye twitch in slight irritation. He looked back up at the cloaked figure and was surprised to see a flirty smile underneath the thick hat that covered his or her face.

"Are you the lucky guy? Are you Draco?" A sultry voice asked, allowing Draco to deduce that she was a woman. Still confused, he nodded and he barely heard Blaise and Byron bursting into laughter behind him when the woman chuckled and finally tore the cloak off herself, revealing a very skimpy leather outfit that revealed far too much for Draco's liking.

"MOTHER OF MERLIN!"

Even William and Reggie had to laugh at the utterly horrified, gaping expression on Draco's usually stoic face but their laughter was soon drowned out as upbeat music began to play and the Slytherins around them cheered loudly. The now scantily clad woman hopped up onto the table in front of Draco and began to dance the most erotic



dance they had ever seen, causing the Head Boy to yelp loudly and bolt up from his seat.

“No! No, no, no! Nott, I am going to kill you!” He growled, looking wildly around the room for the Slytherin in question but he was distracted by his other housemates cheering even louder and shoving him forward to the woman who was now dancing her way towards him.

“Well, I know I’m going to celebrate my stag party in America.” Philippe shouted above the music to Oswald behind him, causing both bachelors to laugh again as they watched the dancer toss what had once been her shorts to the top of Draco’s head.

The Head Boy cringed in disgust and hurled it away from him at the crowd behind them, groaning when Crabbe had caught it and quickly tugged it onto his head. Beside him, a Slytherin first year looked up at it in question and shrugging, Crabbe grinned and relented, bending down and placing the shorts on the first year’s head instead.

Heavily amused, Blaise tugged Draco back into his seat and offered him another bottle of firewhiskey to which this time, Draco took and downed in a single gulp. Unfortunately, before he could finish swallowing it, the dancer had plopped herself right into his lap, causing him to yelp again and spray the whole mouthful of whiskey onto the person in front of him – Oswald Cunningham.

“MALFOY!” Oswald raged, hastily wiping his face with his handkerchief but Draco barely heard him as he shoved the dancer off him and bolted right back up. Cursing loudly, he yanked the crown off his head and placing it on top of Philippe’s instead.

At this point, the whole room was in hysterics and Byron, Reggie and William were beside themselves in their laughter – clutching at each other for support. Blaise was trying and desperately failing to hold back his laughter while behind him, Malcolm and Theodore were grinning like twin Cheshire cats, holding their bottles of vodka up at Draco in a teasing acknowledgment.

Fortunately, it seemed the female dancer had finally taken the hint and was now dancing in front of Philippe instead. Unlike Draco, Philippe seemed to be enjoying it as he leaned back against his seat and watched, smirking in self-satisfaction.

Shaking his head at the scene, Draco finally turned to his friends and nodded weakly in gratitude. "Thanks for the theatrics, everyone. I'm going to go back to my room to turn in, alright? Dancing, half-naked women who aren't Potter just isn't my thing." He told them, smirking when he saw Byron pretend to choke himself at the mushy words.

Blaise grinned back and nodded, raising a hand up for Draco to give a firm friendly clap of acknowledgement. "You're finally whipped, Malfoy. I'm so proud. Go on, then. I promise we'll clean up here so we don't get caught." He nodded before turning back to the dancer in front of them.

Chuckling, Draco gave a brief salute of farewell to Philippe but the other heir just winked back before returning his gaze to the dancing woman in front of him, smirking wider when she began to remove her top.

After bidding more farewells and words of gratitude to his friends – including Oswald who complained at him for spraying his drink all over him and Theodore whom he both thanked and nearly strangled for hiring the 'entertainment', Draco finally headed out of the common room.

He felt himself relaxing at the silence that greeted him in the corridors as he made his way back to his dormitory, cringing when he caught a faint whiff of the cheap perfume of the dancer – as well as the smell of liquor – still on his clothes.

Once he got to his room, he immediately headed for the shower, removed his clothes and soaked himself thoroughly in soothing warm water, closing his eyes when he felt the water running down the muscles of his firm back.

After scrubbing himself a few times and making certain the smell of the party was completely washed away from his skin, he finally let

himself bask in the warmth of the water in silence and thought back on Philippe's words.

Are you crazy?! An Auror?! Do you have any idea of the hours of training that will take? The late nights? The long shifts?

Sighing, Draco shut off the water and carefully reached for the towel hanging near the shower stall, pausing to wrap it securely around his waist. After brushing his teeth and making sure his bathroom was sparkling clean once again, he finally stepped out made his way to his closet.

I wonder if he was right...Should I talk more to Harry about this? Draco thought to himself again as he pulled on a pair of black, silk pajamas, using the towel to dry his hair before hanging it carefully on the wall behind him to dry.

Forget it...I'm exhausted. I'll think about this more in the morning after my exam... He concluded, shaking his head at himself as he finally began walking to his bedroom.

As soon as he entered the room, however, the sight that greeted him brought a small, fond smile to his face. There, curled up adorably on his bed, lay a pajama-clad Harry tucked securely underneath his blankets, her slender arms wrapped around what appeared to be a shirt of his she had taken out of his closet. Murmuring in her sleep, she turned and buried her face into his shirt, sighing peacefully in her sleep.

Still smiling and trying his best not to wake her, he carefully took the shirt from her hands and placed it on the bedside table beside his bed. Then, chuckling, he slowly eased himself under the covers beside her and adjusted her position so that she was hugging him instead.

Unfortunately, this still seemed to wake her up and she blinked sleepily up at him, her green eyes looking misty and confused. "Wha—What...? Draco...? Is that you?" She murmured, holding back a yawn as Draco leaned forward and placed a kiss on her forehead.

“Mmmhmm...You look really cute when you’re sleepy and hugging my shirt, you know that?” He teased, pulling her closer against him and slipping his hand underneath her pajama top so that he was caressing her bare back.

Blushing, she snuggled closer into his chest and sighed, closing her eyes in contentment. “I needed something that smelled like you...” She mumbled, using a hand to tousle her hair away from her face. When she noticed him still staring at her, she bit her lip and gave him a sheepish smile.

“I’m sorry...I couldn’t sleep in my dorms. The boys wouldn’t stop teasing me every five minutes about you...I needed to sleep early for tomorrow’s midterms so I came here.” She explained sleepily but Draco shushed her gently and stroked her hair in response.

“You shouldn’t be sleeping there in the first place. I’ll talk to the headmaster about transferring you tomorrow and—”

Harry shook her head fiercely and squeezed him to get his attention. “No, that’s fine. I don’t want to move, Draco. I really did just want to sleep early tonight. Otherwise, I like my dorm mates.” She assured him. At the firm tone of her voice and his own exhaustion, Draco decided to talk more about it the next time she brought it up.

Clearing his throat, he spoke up softly. “I’m sorry I wasn’t here. Blaise and the others threw a stag party for me and I—”

Jaimee chuckled softly and nodded, silencing him by giving him a kiss on the lips. “I know. I was the one who suggested it. How was it, did you have fun?” She asked, looking up at him with bright green eyes.

Draco looked down at her lovely face and felt a warm, fuzzy feeling in his stomach. He smiled at her, shaking his head in utter amazement at her sweetness. With a sinking feeling in his chest, he finally knew the answer to the question he had been plaguing over that night.

Jaimee was still Harry. She wasn’t there to be his perfect girl like he wanted her to be. He didn’t have the heart to make her give up her

dream job now. He didn't have the heart to make her choose between him or the person she wanted to become.

No matter what Philippe had said and whether or not he had been right, Draco was not going to stand in the way of Harry being anything she wanted to be. Even if it meant he had to make some sacrifices for her to be the person she was always meant to be.

That was why he loved her in the first place.

Finally blinking himself out of his depressing thoughts, he leaned down and gave her a kiss on her scar. "It was fun, yes. But to be honest, I'd much rather be here with you than up there with them and that erotic dancer any day." He told her, leaning down again and this time kissing her on the nose.

Blushing, she managed a smile and pressed her lips against his in a sweet kiss, wrapping her hands snugly around his neck. Just when he had wrapped his own arms around her waist, however, Harry suddenly pulled back and she looked down at him with narrowed eyes, the expression on her face one of shock and anger.

"Erotic dancer?!"

Laughing affectionately, Draco pulled her down back against him and rolled them over so that he was on top of her, muffling her angry protests with another long, passionate kiss.

Within the next ten seconds, she had forgotten completely what she had been mad about.

"Knock, knock."

In one of the elegant Malfoy estates in France, Lorraine sighed and turned away from her reflection just as Anton entered her bedroom and stood by her doorway. He looked at her with a worried frown, leaning uncertainly against the doorframe.

"You alright...? You look more hideous than usual."

Biting back an irritated retort at his teasing remark, she rolled her eyes and fell back onto her large four-poster bed, her eyes staring blankly up at the elegant ceiling of her room. Around her, lush curtains and expensive paintings adorned the walls while on her bedside table – inside a small velvet box – lay another diamond bracelet Philippe had given her after her fiasco with Ron.

Holding back a wave of tears, she turned to lie down on her stomach and pulled a pillow to herself, burying her face into it to hide her face. Finally sensing something was wrong; Anton walked into the room and sat down beside her, reaching a hand out to stroke her mane of blonde hair.

“Hey, love...Are you alright? You’ve been pretty down ever since you returned from Hogwarts. Don’t tell me they’ve had you deported from there too...You haven’t been stealing any girlfriends from anyone lately, have you?” He kidded gently, trying to make her laugh.

It didn’t work, however, as Lorraine merely buried her face deeper into her pillow and began to cry, her shoulders shaking from her heavy sobs. Biting his lip, Anton looked at her in uncertainty for a minute before his face seemed to light up in realization and he walked hastily out of the room.

He returned about three minutes later carrying a glass of chocolate milk and a plate containing a large slice of chocolate cake, setting both down carefully onto the table beside her bed. “Grandmother made chocolate cake this morning...Here. I promise I won’t tease you about getting fat.” He offered, poking her gently on her shoulder.

That seemed to do the trick as Lorraine finally looked up with swollen red eyes and managed a weak smile at him, hugging her knees as she forced herself into a sitting position. Once she was comfortable, Anton handed the plate of chocolate cake to her and she began eating it in silence.

After several minutes, she sighed and set her plate back down, turning to give her brother a sad smile. “I don’t want to marry Philippe, Anton. I really don’t. And to be quite honest, it isn’t fair that Draco gets to marry who he wants and they stick me with that...that

bastard.” She told him bitterly, her eyes downcast. At her words, Anton managed a weak, bitter laugh.

“Since when was anything ever fair in this family anyway?” He agreed, wrapping his arms around her and pulling her into a comforting hug. She returned it and wrapped her arms around him, holding back another fresh round of tears when she caught sight of the engagement ring on her finger.

“I hate this thing!” She grumbled and before Anton could react, she had pulled away from him and yanked the ring off her finger, hurling it angrily across the room. Anton watched it hit the door and fall back onto the carpet but Lorraine didn’t seem to be satisfied as she walked over to it and began stomping on it with her heels.

“Stupid, stupid thing!” She cursed out loud; stomping on the ring again and again until Anton finally sighed and walked over to her, gathering her back into his arms to cease her efforts.

“Stop it, Lorraine. You’re not accomplishing anything.” He told her, guiding her back to sit on the edge of her bed. He got the glass of chocolate milk on her table and handed it to her, watching as she drank from it until the angry flush on her cheeks began to fade away.

Once she had calmed down, he walked over to the ring and picked it up, setting it back carefully on her table. “Look, Raine...No matter what happens now, nothing is going to make the family change their mind about this. We need this marriage with the Winchesters and though I hate the idea of forcing you into this as well, I highly doubt you’ll be able to convince them otherwise.” He explained, causing his sister to give him a spiteful glare.

“So that’s it?! I’m just supposed to let Uncle Lucius dictate my life for me like that?! I’m not like Alexandra and the others, Anton! I never was!” She snapped at him, her eyes narrowed accusingly at him.

He winced at the tone of her voice but said nothing, rising to his feet and looking to the far corner of the room where once again, a tiny owl began tapping frantically at the glass of her window. Knowing exactly

who it was from, Anton smirked and shook his head in slight amusement, turning around to face Lorraine's expectant glare.

"If I were you...I'd stop accepting love letters from tiny, irritating owls and start getting ready for Draco's engagement party. Father, Uncle Lucius, and even Grandfather will be there...As well as your fiancé...And even some of Harry's friends." He drawled out loud, purposely speaking slow as though he meant to imply something else.

Unfortunately, Lorraine didn't seem to understand and she glared at him in confusion, her eyes flicking back to the owl that was still tapping impatiently at her window. Sensing her doubt, Anton smirked wider and gestured to the engagement ring on her desk, a mischievous glint in his blue eyes.

"It's pointless to try and convince our family to break off your engagement. I'm sure the Winchesters feel the same way about you. It would probably take a huge scandal for the Winchester family to even consider breaking off their son's engagement to you so I hope you don't do anything reckless at the party. Merlin knows, the family gets enough of that from me." He continued, chuckling to himself when he finally saw realization dawning in Lorraine's eyes.

"Th—That's—"

"Well, I'd better go get my tux ready. I don't want to be late and disappoint all those wonderful relatives who are just waiting to start comparing me to Draco. I'm sure I'll be the life of the party." He mocked himself sarcastically, leaning down to drop a kiss on Lorraine's forehead.

The female Malfoy was no longer listening as she jumped up from her seat and rushed over to her window, opening the glass frame and allowing the small brown owl into her room. Then – as though she realized he was leaving – she hurried over to him and pulled him in for a brief, grateful hug, a small smile finally reappearing on her face.

"Thanks..."



Anton pretend to roll his eyes as she let him go and rushed over to her closet, pulling out a beautiful blue gown and a matching pair of shoes before settling them down beside her bed.

Before he left the room, he saw Lorraine smiling mischievously as she began to read the owl's letter, an undecipherable twinkling in her blue eyes. The last thing he saw as he walked out was her grabbing a piece of parchment and scribbling furiously on it with a small grin on her face.

I hope I didn't set something off. He thought, feeling a little worried. Then, shrugging his shoulders, he shook his head and laughed, making his way back to his room.

Nah...It's Lorraine...She wouldn't do anything that scandalous.

"Mmm...Draco..."

Harry let her book slip from her hands and her eyes automatically closed as she felt Draco's lips caressing the nape of her neck from behind, his hands wrapping themselves tightly around her waist. She could almost see the smirk on his face as he lifted her up onto his lap, leaning backwards until his back was pressing comfortably against the tree behind them.

They had both just finished their midterm exams that morning and were now studying contentedly together near the lake outside Hogwarts, their books and parchment spread out along the grass. She had pretty much been reading about the different departments in the Ministry of Magic for her qualifying exam when the Slytherin had lost all interest in studying altogether and began studying her instead, watching her silently with sharp, intense eyes.

She had tried to ignore him at first but eventually, she felt him edging closer towards her on the grass and it wasn't until he began to press very sensual kisses on the back of her neck that she had lost track of what she was reading and began melting in his arms.

It didn't help that several other Hogwarts students were scattered around them near the lake, all of which were studying in either pairs

or groups for their exams that afternoon. Feeling a couple of eyes on them, Jaimee blushed and half-heartedly began to struggle in his arms.

“Draco...Stop... I seriously have to finish reading this. My Auror qualifying exam is next week and I can’t afford to...Mmmm...” Her voice trailed off into a purr when he nuzzled her neck, leaning down to nip playfully at the skin.

“So study...What’s stopping you..?” He drawled, smirking at the rather perverted stares of some passing Hufflepuff second year boys when they caught sight of their suggestive position. He returned their look with a single sneer and a flash of his badge was all it took before they took off, running towards the bigger group of students near the lake’s edge.

When he resumed his efforts and his hands began to wander over her body, she stifled a groan and tried to remove herself from his lap. “Draco, I’m serious! I barely have a week to prepare for this exam and with the added stress of the engagement and the hectic schedules your mother sets on me, I have to get as much reading done as I can!” She said in exasperation, trying to free herself from his embrace.

“So read then, Potter. Just let me hold you like this while you’re at it.” Draco reasoned with a laugh, oblivious to the growing impatience on her face as she grunted and shoved his hands away, turning around and narrowing her eyes at him in irritation.

Finally sensing that he had gone a bit too far, Draco raised up his hands in mock surrender and released her, allowing the Gryffindor to slide off his lap back to sit back down onto the grass. When she grabbed her thick book and buried her nose into it once more, he sighed and reached for his own book as well.

“You’re really hung up about this exam, aren’t you? Stop worrying about it so much, Harry. You’re going to do just fine! You’re the savior of the Wizarding world for Merlin’s sake! Why wouldn’t they accept you?” He pointed out in mild irritation, causing a scoff of derision to escape her lips.

“Maybe I don’t want to keep riding on that title, Malfoy! Did you ever think of that? I want to get this job because I earned it. Not because I’m the bloody boy-turned-girl-who-lived!” She snapped back, her voice sounding clipped and restrained.

Draco felt a surge of anger at her moodiness and slammed his book shut, turning around sharply to give her a menacing sneer. “Why the bloody hell are you taking it out on me, Potter? What’s with you, anyway? You’ve been bitchy this entire morning.” He growled, rolling his eyes when she turned around and glared at him.

“Bitchy?! You mother just had me endure a body wax – in which you abandoned me just to remind you – and after, she took me to a bloody salon for five hours just to have my bloody nails painted! After that, she dragged me and your cousins’ fiancés all around half of London just to look for a pair of bloody shoes – which – by the way, she made me wear for the next half of London to look for a bloody purse that goes with it!” She rushed out, causing Draco to blink speechlessly at her angry face.

“Oh by the way, I’m supposed to meet her again this afternoon after my last exam so that she can drag me around London again this time to look for a bloody set of jewelry to match the dress I’m supposed to wear for tonight for your bloody engagement party! Oh and in the midst of all this, I’m supposed to be training harder because I just got a bloody POOR AGAIN on my last test in my Auror class! HOW CAN I NOT BE BITCHY?!” She practically screamed at him, finally causing Draco to wince as some of the nearby students turned to look at the arguing couple in interest.

Lowering his voice to a whisper, Draco tried to calm her down with a pointed gaze. “Stop shouting, Harry. You’re not helping—” He broke himself off when to his utter surprise, his fiancé suddenly buried her face in her hands and burst into tears, attracting even more stares toward them.

“H—Harry?!”

Unsure of what to do, Draco awkwardly pulled placed his hands on her shoulders and she immediately buried her face against his chest, her shoulders heaving and her voice breaking in soft, heartbroken sobs that wracked her entire frame.

“I—I’m sorry! H—Hermione said something about PMS...? I s—seem to shifting from one m—mood to another. T—This sucks!” She began, stopping herself to allow for a small hiccup before speaking again. “A—All this girl stuff is so hard! H—how do woman stand it?! I want to be a boy again, Draco! I really do!” She began sobbing against him again and this time, Draco didn’t bother the half-kringe, half-grimace that was on his face as he awkwardly comforted her against him.

With a blank, bewildered look on his face, Draco began rubbing soothing circles on her back, his eyes darting desperately around the area. He found what he was looking for when he saw Pansy and several of her friends hanging out under another tree near theirs. Raising his wand, he pointed it right at them and whispered a summoning spell, immediately causing a small, chocolate frog to fly out of Pansy’s bag and float towards them.

Fortunately, Pansy didn’t seem to notice as Draco grabbed the frog out of mid-air and hesitantly pulled himself back from Harry’s embrace, dangling it nervously in front of her face. He yelped and jumped back when she snatched it immediately out his hands, holding it up to the light.

“Chocolate!” She exclaimed, her tears suddenly forgotten and her eyes suddenly brightening as she ripped open the wrapper. Draco watched cautiously, the grimace on his face slowly settling into an amused smile as she bit the frog’s head off and instantly seemed to calm down, the angry flush on her face fading slowly from her pale cheeks.

I’ll never understand PMS and chocolate. Draco thought to himself, smiling as he watched her devouring the chocolate frog in less than three minutes. When she was done, she looked a lot better and gave him a small, grateful smile.

Hesitating slightly, he reached out and pulled her back against him and this time, she let him hold her, melting against his embrace. Shaking her head, she spoke with slight embarrassment, drawing his attention to the apologetic expression on her face.

"I'm sorry for snapping like that...I suppose I really am stressed out in all this. Plus, it wasn't like you didn't deserve it anyway...If you hadn't left me the other day, I wouldn't have had to be dragged around London with your mother all afternoon." She reminded him, causing the Slytherin to smile sheepishly and answer her by giving her a kiss on the cheek.

"Let's just say...If my father rules the family with an iron fist, my mother rules the family with iron heels. I'm sorry for that...I shouldn't have left you alone. I promise to tell her to loosen up a bit on the shopping and primping. She seems to forget all the time that you used to be a boy." He mused, causing Harry to sigh in exasperation.

"You'd better. Otherwise, I'm taking more of my PMS out on you, Malfoy. Trust me, take it from the personal experience of someone who has had to deal with a PMS-ing Hermione for seven years, you do not want to deal with that." She threatened, laughing when Draco merely stuck his tongue childishly at her in response.

After the initial laughter died out and she picked up her book again, he leaned back against the tree and watched her study in silence, his eyes still admiring the delectable patch of skin at the nape of her neck. Eventually, she positioned herself between his legs and leaned back against his chest, raising a hand to turn a page of her book.

Tilting his head slightly to give her a kiss on the top of her head, he took a deep breath and closed his eyes. "By the way...I probably should tell you before I forget. I'll be gone the whole of next week..." He began, causing Harry to stiffen in surprise and turn her head slightly to face him.

"Why? Where are you going?" She asked, her eyebrows creased in concern.

Sensing the dejected tone of her voice, Draco smiled at her and gave her a reassuring kiss. "My father is taking me with him to Italy for a business conference with MMC. It'll be for five days so I'll be missing out on some classes next week. Till then, can you handle my mother's bouts of shopping sprees by yourself?" He teased, tapping her cheek.

Rolling her eyes, she laughed and nodded, settling herself back into his arms. "I hope so...Just as long as you're back on Saturday for Quidditch so I can kick your arse again, I'm good. I'll be studying all of next week anyway for my qualifying exam so that'll give me some time to myself." She mused out loud, nodding in affirmation.

He scoffed and poked her ribs playfully. "Who says you're going to kick my arse, Potter? I'll make you eat your words." He growled, leaning over and nuzzling her neck again in an obvious attempt to tickle her, causing the Gryffindor to giggle in protest.

They fell into a comfortable silence after that – Harry burying her nose back into her books while Draco's gaze wandered off until he was staring up at Hogwarts castle. He let about thirty minutes more of silence pass before he spoke up again, reaching up and tucking a lock of black hair behind her ear.

"About your Auror class... What happened? You're one of the top students in our year, how did you get a (P)?" He asked in concern, watching as Harry visibly stiffened at his question. When it looked as though Draco wouldn't let the matter drop, she finally let out a heavy sigh and bit her lip.

Setting her book back down on her lap, she leaned back against him and closed her eyes in exhaustion. "It isn't about my fighting ability or knowledge...It was more on my awareness. You were right before, Draco. I am helplessly ignorant and clueless when it comes to details and deduction. Unfortunately, Kingsley seems to have seen this about me too." She told him, much to his surprise.

"Kingsley? He gave you a (P) because—"

“Because I don’t have constant vigilance. He’s right! I don’t. To be honest, I don’t even know the first thing about constant vigilance or what I can do to train for it. It’s not exactly something I know how to study.” She complained, burying her face into her hands.

“I could help you...?”

Blinking in surprise, she looked up into Draco’s impish grin and one of her eyebrows rose up in question. “You? You can teach me how to be ‘constantly vigilant’? How? How does one even go about teaching something like that?” She asked incredulously, shaking her head in disbelief.

He smirked and offered a shrug, pulling her closer against him. “You’ll have to leave that one up to me. Starting this afternoon – excluding tonight of course – until I leave for Italy, I’ll help you become a bit more deductive in your fighting. How about it, Potter? You’ll have to leave your pride behind though.” He told her, causing her to roll her eyes in exasperation.

“Do I really have a choice? It’s not like I can do anything else...” She mumbled, wincing when Draco suddenly grinned and jumped up, yanking her to her feet.

Once she stood up, he spun her around so that she was facing him and slowly began to remove his neck tie with relative ease. Seeing that, however, Harry blushed and hastily placed her hands over his in panic, giving him a scandalized glare.

“What are you doing?! Why are you undressing yourself? What are you thinking of doing in a place like—”

She was cut off by Draco’s laughter as he pushed her gently away from him in amusement. “Relax, Potter. I’m not undressing myself. Just watch, alright?” He insisted, untangling the green necktie from around his neck and moving to stand behind her.

“What are you going to do...? Is this supposed to be lesson one or something—” She stopped talking when Draco began tying the necktie around her eyes, plunging her vision into total darkness.

Unsure of what to say or of what he was doing, she raised her hands up and reached around blindly, cursing when she tripped on a loose rock on the ground and ended up falling against him. He caught her easily and helped her back up, adjusting the necktie so that it was more securely tied around her eyes.

“What the bloody hell is this, Malfoy? What are you doing?! If this is one of your kinky games, I’m telling you I’ll—”

“Try and punch me, Potter.”

“What?!”

Harry’s voice sounded croaked as she snapped, desperately raising her hands up to determine where he was standing. When that didn’t help, she sighed loudly and let her hands drop in exasperation. “How am I supposed to punch you when I can’t see you?! How is this supposed to be helping me train, you idiot?! You’re just waiting my time!” She snapped, making to drop back down onto the grass but he spoke again, his voice sounding heavily amused.

“Just shut up and use your bloody ears, Potter. You’re blind, not deaf. You can also use your hands or your nose to try and figure out where I am. Use your head for once and think.” He mocked loudly, his voice sounding a couple of feet away from where she stood.

Childishly mimicking his words in her head, she rolled her eyes to herself and did as he instructed – listening closely to the sound of his breathing and trying to redirect her blind movements towards him. He seemed to laugh to himself and stepped toward her, allowing her to catch a faint whiff of his familiar scent.

“I feel completely ridiculous...” She muttered loudly as she stumbled around towards him, cursing under her breath when her shoe stubbed clumsily against a rock and she almost lost her balance.

“You look ridiculous too. A lot of people are staring at us right now.” Draco pointed out smugly and hearing the laughter in his voice caused a low growl of anger to erupt from her throat. Following the



sound of his sniggers, she finally decided that she was close enough to take a shot and swung a fist right at the direction of his voice.

Although she had the luck of hearing him curse and back away, she seemed to have miscalculated her distance from him and ended up swinging at thin air, the force of her punch propelling her forward until she came hurtling to the ground.

Grunting in exertion, she turned and twisted desperately to regain her balance but in her blind movements, her foot stubbed against another small rock on the ground. She finally stumbled back to the grass, landing painfully on her arse.

Wincing and muttering to herself in humiliation, she raised a hand and angrily yanked his necktie off her eyes only to find him standing over her and laughing in amusement.

"It's not funny! That hurt!" She snapped, taking his offered and allowing him to hoist her back onto her feet. Still laughing, Draco offered her a grin and took out a handkerchief to wipe the smudge of dirt that had gotten onto her cheeks.

"It only hurt because you didn't use your senses well to find out where I was. You could have very well hit me if you had wanted to, you know. You just need to stop being so ignorant and reckless all the time." He told her, causing her to choke in disbelief at his words.

"Me being ignorant and reckless?! What do call yourself, you self-centered bastard—"

"Let's try it again. Only this time, try and hit me alright?" He offered, grabbing his necktie and beginning to tie it around her eyes again. This time, Harry wasn't distracted and she pulled away from him, yanking the necktie off and giving him a demanding glare.

"Why am I letting you do this? What point are you trying to make?" She asked him, raising an eyebrow at him in impatience. The Slytherin just smirked and shoved his hands in his pocket, his eyes trailing upwards to stare at the Hogwarts castle in thought.

“My father used to train me like this after my fifth year. I told him I wanted to learn how to become a better fighter so that I could stop being such a wimp in front of you. The first few times I had to fight him, I had to do it with a blindfold over my eyes.” He explained, looking up to see Harry staring at him with wide, amazed eyes.

“H—How is that possible...? How did you—”

“Once you manage to fight with a blindfold over your eyes, Potter... Then you’ll be ready for that Auror qualifying exam. I promise.” He told her firmly, bringing his eyes back down at her and giving her an encouraging nod.

“But...I can’t fight with my eyes covered! That’s crazy! How am I supposed to see?!” She asked him, her voice cracking slightly in desperation.

Draco shook his head and reached up to cup her cheek, leaning down to plant a kiss on her scar. “You’re an amazing fighter, Harry. And this is the only time you’ll ever hear me say it but you’re even better than me. Hands down.” He began, watching as a weak laugh escaped her lips.

“So if I can do it, I know you can do much better than me. That’s why I’m going to help you...You want to be an Auror, don’t you? I want you to be one too.” He whispered gently into her ear, wrapping his arms around her waist and pulling their bodies closer together.

Closing her eyes, she allowed herself to relax in his arms. Unconsciously, she began memorizing each and every inch of him – the feel of his skin, his gentle breathing, his scent. Biting back a smile, she wrapped her own arms around him and opened her eyes, looking up into his eyes and admiring his handsome face.

Finally, after a long moment of letting all of these observations sink in, she allowed herself a mischievous grin and nodded, stepping back away from him. “Alright. Let’s try this one more time, Malfoy. Any time you’re ready.” She urged, fidgeting impatiently as Draco chuckled and began tying the necktie around her eyes once more.

“Alright...I’ll count to three then I’ll remain completely silent. Try to hit me with everything you have, Potter.” He instructed, taking a couple of steps away from her and watching as she held her hands back up to feel her surroundings.

“One...” He grinned and shoved his hands into his pocket as she turned in the direction of his voice, taking a few cautious steps towards him.

“Two...” A cute smile was on her face as she took another step near him, stopping briefly in confusion when her hands came across the figure of the large tree they had been leaning against on the ground.

“Thr—” Draco never finished as she suddenly launched herself at him and tackled him back to the ground, causing him to wince in pain when she collapsed on top of him and pinned him to the grass with her body.

Giggling playfully to herself, she used both her hands and held his down, leaning forward to bury her face into the crook of his neck. When Draco answered her with a low groan of pain and annoyance, she laughed harder rewarded him with a kiss on the cheek.

Seeing the expression on her face, however, he couldn’t stay angry for long and he began to laugh with her – freeing one of his hands and using it to unclasp his necktie from her eyes. Once he had managed to take it off, he found himself staring up at her beautiful green eyes. She smiled at him, her hand releasing his to lovingly caress his cheek.

“Found you...” She whispered softly, her voice teasing and gentle. Her eyes rested adoringly on his face, memorizing and inspecting ever feature with unhidden admiration. Blushing under her gaze, Draco felt his breath hitch when their eyes eventually met – both pairs of orbs filled with a unique mixture of mirth and tenderness unseen by anybody else except them.

His heart bursting happily in his chest, he mimicked her actions and raised his own hand to cup her cheek as well, pulling her face down until her lips were inches away from his.

Meeting her smile, he forced himself to speak – his voice coming out in a shaky, reverent whisper.

“No...I think I found you...”

Their lips met and neither of them spoke again for a fairly long time.

Several yards away, a disgruntled Pansy Parkinson was leafing irritably through her bag. Screeching in frustration, she hurled her book at Daphne and began stomping her foot impatiently onto the ground.

“Where’s my chocolate frog?!”

“I’ll see you later tonight at the party, alright?” Hermione said softly as she approached the Slytherin table and bent down to place a lingering kiss on Blaise’s cheek. He nodded and she gave him one last smile before exiting the Great Hall with several other Gryffindor seventh years to get ready for that night’s engagement party.

Watching her walk away, Blaise failed to notice the small figure that had walked up behind him and nearly jumped and he felt a tiny hand on his shoulder. Turning around to see an adorable six-year-old girl sitting beside him, his eyes visibly softened and he leaned down toward her.

“Hey princess...How did you get here? Aren’t you supposed to be at home with mother getting ready?” He asked, raising an eyebrow when the girl smiled at him and made a fire gesture with her hand, causing Blaise to chuckle lightly under his breath.

“Floo, huh? Well, since you can’t exactly shout your location, someone must have sent you here to pick me up then. Who was it?” He asked curiously, watching as she hugged the stuffed bear tighter to her chest and shook her head, raising up the sealed envelope in her hand toward him.

Mildly curious, Blaise raised an eyebrow and took it from her small hands. "What's this? Who's this from?" He asked as he began opening the flap with his table knife.

The girl gestured silently with her hands again and made a face, causing Blaise to laugh and ruffle her hair affectionately. "Uncle Giovanni? I see... With my luck, it's bad news and he knows my little sister would probably be the best way to give it to me..." His voice trailed off as he stared at the words on the letter in slight surprise, his eyebrows fusing together in annoyance.

Slightly curious as to why her brother had suddenly gone pale, the small girl leaned forward over his shoulder. Unfortunately, Blaise had already stuffed it back into the envelope and took another long sip of his water, the expression on his face one of anxiety and anticipation.

Turning back to the girl staring at him, he managed a weak smile and pulled her onto his lap. "Isabella, Uncle Giovanni says that Vittoria will be there tonight for Draco's party. We haven't seen her in a long time haven't we?" He said softly, his voice tinged with slight disdain.

Hearing the name 'Vittoria', Isabella made another face and buried her face into Blaise's robes, causing him to laugh in spite of himself and place a kiss on the top of her head. "I know, I know...I don't like her either but I swear...Your Uncle Giovanni keeps trying to pair us up." He told her, wincing when he saw her amber eyes staring reproachfully at him.

"Don't look at me like that! Besides, I want to introduce you to someone later...She's a nice, pretty girl and I think you'd like her. She likes puzzles and books too..." He continued, a genuine smile gracing his face when Isabella's eyes lit up and she grinned back at him, nodding excitedly.

Just as Isabella had hugged him tightly around his waist, Pansy spoke up from where she sat beside them, gesturing to six-year-old with a curious expression on her face. "Is that your little sister, Blaise? Why isn't she saying anything? Hasn't she gotten over being

kidnapped yet?” She asked rather bluntly, causing Isabella to pale and stiffen in fear.

Blaise leveled Pansy with the fiercest glare she had ever seen in her life.

“Because she can’t speak, Pansy. She’s traumatized! For once in your pathetic existence, exercise a little tact and keep your bloody mouth shut!” He growled, causing Pansy to gasp and drop her fork onto her plate in shock. Before she could recover and utter an apology, the Italian heir had shot up from his seat and began gathering Isabella into his arms.

“Come on, Isabella...I’m taking you back home first, alright? You know it isn’t safe for you to wander around...Let’s go find Uncle Giovanni.” He told her gently and at his words, she nodded and clung onto his neck tightly as he carried her out of the Great Hall.

A/N: Alright, I know I promised that this chapter would contain the engagement party but as I was writing, the story just seemed to take on a life of its own and I couldn’t stop it. The stag party suddenly sprung up from the back of my mind! Ehehe.

The engagement party will start in the next chapter. As well as more Malfoys. I promise. :wink:

Also, just a few things I’d like to explain first. After the engagement party, Draco will be gone for about two chapters as he will be on his business trip so I hope you guys don’t miss him too much. :giggle: Till then, I will focus on Harry, her Auror exam and the rest of the characters so a lot of plot developments will take place. :wink: I’m still trying to decide if I’m going to write a short one-shot about Byron so give me some time on that alright? Ehehe. Till next time!

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## Chapter 28 – Natural Woman

“Hey Prongslet.”

Jumping in mild surprise, Harry spun around at the sound of his voice – the dejected look on her face immediately replaced with a small, relieved smile.

“Paddy! You’re here!” She exclaimed softly, jumping up from the bed and rushing over to him. Sirius laughed in surprise when she threw her arms around him and pulled him in for a tight hug, her shoulders slightly trembling as he held her.

When she pulled away, he inspected her appearance in unhidden admiration.

On his goddaughter’s lithe frame was a black strapless evening gown that clung on tightly to every feminine curve of her body. The material dipped into a seductive V behind her, exposing a generous amount of the pale skin of her back while trailing all the way down to end into a graceful skirt that ended several inches above her knees.

“You look...stunning, Harry.” He breathed out loud, his eyes wide as he continued to survey her appearance with a mixture of pride and awe.

Looking up, he saw the awkward expression on her face when he began eyeing the shimmering necklace adorned with exquisite diamonds around her neck. The necklace paired itself nicely with her engagement ring and the dangling diamond earrings hanging from her newly pierced ears and at this, Sirius’ eyebrows disappeared into his hairline.

“Since when did you get—”

“Piercings? This afternoon. Narcissa thought it wouldn’t do well for a Malfoy heiress not being able to wear earrings.” Came the bitter response and Sirius barely had the time to answer before she gave a heavy sigh and collapsed back onto the bed, shaking her head in dismay.

“What am I wearing, Sirius?! I don’t feel like myself! This isn’t me!” She groaned loudly, tugging in annoyance at the tightness of the necklace around her neck. She looked back up and frowned at her reflection in silence, shaking her head at herself as though in disapproval.

Sitting down beside her, Sirius carefully inspected the rest of her appearance and noted for the first time that, strangely enough, he had to agree with her.

His goddaughter did not look like herself.

Her black hair had been twisted up into a stylish chignon at the top of her head and was held up by a clasp adorned yet again with several diamonds. Several strands of curled hair fell down to frame her face while a pair of silk white gloves clung onto her hands all the way up to her elbows. Her make-up had been flawlessly applied such that she looked exactly like the classy heiress she was going to be named as that night.

In fact, she looked like she had just stepped out the cover of one of those WitchGlamour Magazines he saw women reading most of the time.

And she looked positively miserable.

One of his eyebrows rose up and he turned her head gently to face him, giving her a small teasing smile. “What’s wrong, Prongslet? You don’t look happy for someone who just got engaged. Don’t tell me you want out? Because if you do, that’s the best thing that could happen and you wouldn’t have to marry that blonde, arrogant git—”

This time, Jaimee managed a laugh and shook her head as she turned to face him. “It’s not that, Sirius! I’m not regretting that I accepted Draco’s proposal! I love him. I really do. It’s just that...Well...This isn’t exactly the kind of lifestyle I want for myself. I was hesitant about being a girl in the first place...Much less living like this...” She let herself trail off, her eyes sadly looking at her reflection in the mirror in front of her.



Sirius followed her gaze, meeting her grim eyes through the mirror. “I don’t really know if I’m up for all this ‘Malfoy heiress’ stuff. Have you read what they’re all talking about in the tabloids? This isn’t me! They’re just waiting for me to screw up! And I hate the fact that I have to keep up with this charade.” She repeated, tearing her gaze away from herself and letting out a huge exhale of breath.

Reaching out to take her hand in his, he squeezed the small limb and gave her an affectionate grin. “Well if that’s the way you feel about it, I doubt you’d want to wear this then, huh?” He started teasingly, pulling a small rectangular case out of his pocket.

She groaned and shook her head warningly at him. “If that’s another piece of jewelry, so help me Sirius, I’ll throw that junk out the—”

“It was your mother’s, Harry. She wore it the night she got engaged to your father.” He interrupted gently, opening the box and pulling out a small silver brooch in the shape of a doe. Hand trembling slightly, Harry looked up at him in silent question for a couple of seconds before reaching out to take it, her fingers caressing the beautiful emerald set right in the center.

“Y—You mean...? I can wear this? I—I—”

Sirius grinned and rolled his eyes at her, pretending to give her a glare. “Of course you can, you prat. I wouldn’t have dug it out of the vault for you otherwise. I was actually planning for you to give this to your fiancé once you got engaged but it looks like it’s meant for you now.” He explained, smiling as she took the brooch from its case and pinned it securely to the front of her dress.

She eyed it for several more seconds before finally looking up and smiling at him, the look in her eyes noticeably brighter than when he had first entered. “Thank you, Sirius...This makes me feel a little better about tonight. I think I’m ready to go out now...” She told him, her voice trembling slightly as she spoke.

Nodding in understanding, he stood up and offered a hand for her to raise herself up from the bed, chuckling when she stumbled slightly

due to her rather torturous-looking stiletto heels. Glaring at him, she wrenched herself out of his arms and ended up stumbling back onto the bed again, wincing when the leather straps of her shoes seemed to char painfully against her skin.

“Damn shoes! Why do women torture themselves in such idiotic ways? What’s so wrong with a pair of godforsaken sneakers?!” She complained loudly, sighing and allowing Sirius to help her up again as he guided her towards the doors.

Before they exited the room, he turned to look at her one last time and gave her an encouraging smile. “They’re all waiting for you. Are you ready?” He told her, watching as the color seemed to drain out of her face.

She gave a soft, bitter laugh and nodded.

“What else could possibly happen tonight...?”

“You look so goddamn beautiful, Harry...”

Blushing under Draco’s heated gaze and at the evident desire she heard his husky voice, Harry’s eyes dropped to her shoes as she entered the vast ballroom on his arm, blushing even darker when they were met with the smattering of lively applause, cheers and congratulatory smiles from the guests around them.

The smile on Draco’s face spoke of pride and exhilaration as he escorted her to the very center of the ballroom where Lucius and Narcissa stood waiting for them, both blondes greeting their son with cordial smiles on their elegant faces.

Seeing the older Malfoys there, Harry immediately disentangled her arm from Draco’s and robotically bent down in the practiced curtsy Narcissa had forcefully taught her the night before. Lucius returned this gesture with a silent inclination of his head while Narcissa smiled approvingly and returned the curtsy easily, smiling wider when Draco took hold of Jaimee’s arm again and turned her so they could both face the crowd of guests watching them.

At the sight of the beautiful couple, most of the faces they were met with were filled with unhidden admiration and awe at they made. Her dark hair and pale features complimented Draco's perfectly and seeing the obvious contempt and bitterness on many of his fellow pureblooded bachelors' faces, a sense of smugness filled the Malfoy heir. He smirked at them, a superior look on his face.

A number of furious camera flashes and clicking followed when – upon the shouted request of a nearby gossip columnist – Draco purposely leaned toward Jaimee and planted a sensual kiss on her cheek, causing the Gryffindor to flush darker and look away to shield her eyes from the photographers.

In contrast to her smirking fiancé, she looked completely miserable at all the unwanted attention and was desperately perusing the crowd for a familiar face to look into. She caught sight of her Gryffindor friends near the far corner of the ballroom near the refreshment table and instantly relaxed, smiling in relief when she was met with Ron and Hermione's warm smiles and waves.

Unfortunately, before she could approach them, Draco had tightened his grip on her arm and began to speak, his words directed to the crowd of pureblooded heirs and families before them.

"I would like to personally express my gratitude to you all for coming and celebrating this wonderful night with me. As you all may have already heard, this is my beautiful and certainly hard-earned fiancé..." He paused to give the crowd a grin, watching as several people among the guests chuckled at his quip.

Jaimee managed a weak laugh at this, looking slightly sheepish at the implied teasing in his words. "Miss Jaimee Potter." He gestured to the Gryffindor, smirking when he was met with a round of applause and Harry darkened further in utter embarrassment.

"I'm going to go hide in a corner now." She muttered under her breath to him, making to pull away but he held on tighter and waited until the applause had died down before speaking again.

“Before this season began, I promised myself that I would never settle for anything less than a woman who was not only beautiful and intelligent but also strong, courageous, spirited and certainly without a sense of taste.” He added, grinning charmingly at the guests and causing another faint ripple of laughter to spread around the room.

Turning to look at Harry’s red, cringing face, the look in Draco’s eyes softened and he reached a hand up to stroke her cheek, causing the girl to tremble slightly in nervousness. “I never thought I’d ever find one as perfect for me in every way imaginable...” His voice trailed off and this time, he turned to his parents and his grandparents – all four of which were smiling proudly behind them.

I’m not perfect! Harry thought in frustration upon hearing his words, sighing and looking away from him only to meet Sirius’ consoling smile directed at her from among the guests in front.

Unfortunately, Draco didn’t see the forlorn expression on her face and continued his speech, his handsome face glowing in pride and happiness as he directed his words to the listening crowd of eager guests before them.

It was during that moment that Harry realized exactly why her fiancé had been chosen as the distinguished heir of the Malfoy family. Facing the crowd of intimidating aristocrats and Wizarding society’s most powerful elite, Draco was completely in his element – proud, regal and confident.

He looked completely immaculate in his black tuxedo with his hair swept back and a confident smirk on his face while his stance and movements spoke clearly of his noble background and breeding. Unlike her, he carried himself with an easy arrogance and power that radiated off him like a natural aura – much like the one exuded by Lawrence Malfoy himself. As he talked, never once did he stutter nor did he hesitate and each word flowed fluently out of his lips.

This is ‘his’ world...Harry thought for the first time, a reluctant smile of admiration on her face as she watched him speak. As though he heard her silent compliment, Draco paused for a brief second and

turned to meet her eyes, smiling he saw the admiration clearly on her face.

And I don't belong in it at all...I stick out like a sore thumb. She realized with a wistful sigh as he turned back to their guests. She shook her head at the discovery. It was only now that she realized exactly how far apart their worlds were from each other and frankly; it did nothing to placate her feelings about marrying into his.

In fact, it made her feel so much worse.

He's champagne...I'm bloody pumpkin juice. She thought irritably, flicking her gaze away from the crowd again when she heard more shutters clicking and more cameras flashed in her face.

"...And so my father and I have both decided. Jaimee and I are to be married as soon as possible. By the 30th day of March to be exact – right after we graduate from Hogwarts. I hope to see you all there once more to celebrate this occasion with me." He finished, smirking again as the guests applauded once more, whispering excitedly amongst themselves.

WHAT?!

As Draco turned to greet the elated smile on his family's faces, he failed to see the horrified look that had formed on Harry's when she had heard his announcement, her green eyes clouding over in shock, doubt and uncertainty.

R—Right after graduation?! B—But that's way too soon! I'm not bloody ready! She thought in panic, forcing a smile when a whole horde of young pureblooded debutantes rushed toward her and encircled her amongst themselves, bombarding her with questions and comments about her attire.

Holy Merlin! I don't want to get married right after I graduate! I thought there would be a one year engagement or something! What the hell?! She thought to herself panic, barely managing to answer the questions of the girls around her as she fought to make her way back to Draco.

“Draco, wait! We need to talk about this! I have to tell you something!”

The Malfoy heir, however, was lost to her and was already being whisked off by a crowd of pureblooded heirs who were all congratulating him on having ‘caught’ the season’s prime debutante. Grunting in irritation, she shoved past more pureblooded guests towards him, ignoring the rather rude comments she was receiving about her apparent ‘lack of manners’.

“Malfoy! Malfoy, come back here! Damn it! Who said anything about getting married after graduation?! We never discussed that at all!” She called after him but nobody seemed to hear her – most especially Draco who was now laughing with Philippe Winchester and being clapped repeatedly on the back by their other friends surrounding him.

Hurrying after him, she began shoving past more guests just as she heard a lively jazz tune starting to play in the background and several couples began to make their way to the dance floor. Cursing under her breath, she winced when she collided with a rather solid form. Swaying clumsily on her heels, she ended up falling to the floor anyway – wincing in anticipation at the sharp pain that was sure to follow.

When it didn’t come and she didn’t seem to be kissing the marble surface of the floor, she felt two firm but gentle hands steadying her. She opened her eyes to see Anton Malfoy peering down at her and looking as handsome as ever in his black tux, his blonde hair tied neatly at his nape with a silver clasp. He gave her a small smirk, a slightly amused look in his blue eyes.

“Watch where you’re going with those heels, Potter...You could seriously injure somebody with those things.” He commented lightly, pulling his hands away and reaching over just in time to grab two glasses of champagne from a passing house-elf.

Reluctantly accepting the glass from him, she took a quick sip before taking a look around the room again. Following her gaze, Anton

smirked wider and shook his head – gesturing to the group Draco was conversing with in the middle of the room.

“You can forget about pulling your fiancé away from them for some time. They’re probably talking about one of three things – money, power, or women. You can take a guess.” He told her, watching as a light tinge of mirth sparkled in her green eyes.

“I gather you don’t seem to share their pooled interests in those subjects then?” She asked in amusement, peering curiously up at him and at that, Anton smirked wider and nodded, downing his drink in a single gulp.

“You could say that. Though I am inclined to admit a partial interest to the women part but then again, you already knew that didn’t you?” He easily replied and at his quip, Harry couldn’t prevent the weak laugh that escaped her lips.

Cocking an eyebrow at her, he simply chuckled and reached out for another glass of champagne. “Seriously? They’re a rather boring, pretentious crowd and I wouldn’t be caught dead talking with them. See the tall, dark-haired one to Draco’s right?” He allowed her to follow his gaze before he continued. “That’s Preston Skeffington...Heir to Gringotts bank. He’s engaged to the redheaded, cheating debutante beside him.” He told her, watching a confused look flicker in her eyes.

“How do you know she’s cheating—”

“I slept with her two weeks ago. She was rumored to having an affair with Winchester about a week later.” He supplied rather bluntly, causing a choked-up half-laugh, half-gasp to escape her lips.

“You’ve already met Winchester, I presume?” He asked with a raised eyebrow, waiting until she nodded before he continued to speak. “Smarmy bastard used to help Draco pick on me when I was five. The one to Draco’s left is Edmund Hatchetson...The last one beside him is Parker Finkleman...From what I hear; their families deal in many underground, illegal corporate activities to earn millions.” He told her, much to her dismay.

“Illegal activities?! Now what could that possibly—”

“In any case, they’re probably going to take another thirty minutes talking so I suggest you go and mingle with your friends. They’re right over there by the refreshment table.” He gestured, reaching over and taking another glass of wine from a nearby table.

She followed his gaze to her Gryffindor housemates and turned to walk over to them but before she could, she felt him grip her arm tightly, forcing her to meet his uncertain gaze. Tensing immediately at the unexpected gesture, she turned and gave him a suspicious glare.

“Anton, could you let me go before Draco sees us and blows your head off? Or more importantly, before I smother you in ice?” She said coldly, narrowing her eyes at the half-veela but he winced and bit his lip, his other hand already reaching for something in his tuxedo’s pocket.

“If I may, Harry...There is something bothering me. I would like to talk to you about something important. I have something to show—”

“Harry! You look gorgeous!”

Both Jaimee and Anton turned around to see Byron walking up to them with a disarming grin, an adorable blonde toddler cradled in his arms. Turning back to look at Anton, Harry was surprised to see that he had hurriedly gone off into the crowd of guests at Byron’s arrival and she would have called after him had Byron not spoken up again, his eyes sweeping over her attire.

“You look bloody great, Harry...Just stunning. I can say it as many times as I have to but nothing I say may ever seem to cut it.” He complimented, causing her to give him a weak, self-conscious glare.

“With cheesy, unoriginal comments like that, I have to wonder if you ever get a woman to fall for it.” She retorted easily, causing the dark-haired Malfoy to laugh good-naturedly at her jibe.



"I look like a bloody, pretentious snob is what you mean, Byron. Anyway, who's that you've got there?" She added further, her eyes flicking curiously over to the giggling little girl tugging impatiently on his collar and giving her a shy grin.

Wincing as he tried to wrestle the tiny arms pulling at his earlobes, Byron smiled and held the little girl up higher for Harry to see her face. "This little annoying angel right here...Is my goddaughter Cherry-Lyn. She's Alexandra's daughter, by the way...She can't talk much yet so unlike her mother, I prefer her company more often." He kidded, causing Harry to laugh she leaned down to ruffle the toddler's blonde pigtails.

"She's adorable..." She murmured, laughing when the toddler answered her by tugging on the diamond necklace around her neck. "You can have it if you want it, you know. You'd probably benefit more from it than I would." She quipped, causing Cherry-Lyn to look up and give her a confused but otherwise toothy grin.

"Gooh!"

Harry and Byron both laughed at her response and watched as Cherry-Lyn eventually bored herself out from playing with the necklace and leaned back sleepily into her godfather's arms, her thumb making its way into her mouth.

As soon as the toddler had settled down, Byron looked back up at her and gave her a rueful smile. "How are you holding up so far? I hope Anton wasn't bothering you or anything..." He paused hesitantly but she instantly shook her head and gave him a reassuring smile, urging him to continue.

"I hate to say it but these parties tend to drag on for quite some time. The main objective of it all is basically to mingle with as many guests as you can and shake as many hands you can until you can positively smell the mixture of sweat on your palms." He told her with a laugh, causing her to wince in disgust at his metaphor.

"Well...Aside from the fact that my supposed fiancé just left me to go off somewhere, the fact that I keep tripping on these heels every five

seconds and also the fact that I just found out tonight that I'm to be married right after I graduate, I suppose I'm bloody fine." She mumbled, causing Byron to give her a sympathetic smirk.

"Yeah...I guess nobody has informed you of that, huh? The Malfoy heir is to be married as soon as possible before he can assume the head position of the family. It's because he's supposed to provide a possible heir within two to three years." He told her, causing the champagne Harry had just sipped into her mouth to spray all over the floor.

"WHAT?!"

Byron cringed at the tone of her voice and took a step back from her seething form. "It's tradition, Potter. I'm surprised Draco's never told you about that...It's been a custom in our family for years now." He explained, causing a vein to nearly pop in her neck.

She grabbed a glass of champagne from another house-elf and downed in a single gulp, wiping her mouth briskly on the back of her hand. "So you mean to tell me that not only am I to be married by this time next year but I will most likely have something growing in my damn stomach?!" She squeaked out, her eyes nearly bulging out of their sockets.

"Technically, the baby grows in your uterus not your stomach—"

"Oh what would you know?! Have you ever been turned into a girl and suddenly find yourself worrying about the mechanics of getting bloody pregnant?!" She snapped at him, causing the metamorphagus to cringe at her ire and take another step backwards from her.

"Well...No...If you put it that way, I haven't—"

"You! As a man! Have you ever anticipated having a bloody CHILD popping out of you from Merlin knows where?!"

Byron winced again, laughing nervously and wiping the sweat off his brow.

“No, I suppose I haven’t...Ehehe...”

“I haven’t even the faintest idea about being pregnant! How big would a baby grow inside a woman?! More importantly, where the hell does it come OUT of me?! I’ve been a woman for less than a year; I don’t know how to pop out a child!” She exploded, causing several guests to look at them in concern at her loud voice.

At this point, Byron was finding it very hard not to burst out laughing and shifted a curiously watching Cherry-Lyn to his other arm. “I’m sure you’ll figure out how it all works by then, Harry. Here, drink this. It’ll help calm you down a little bit.” He offered with a smirk, handing her his drink.

Harry took it with shaking hands instantly and downed it in another single gulp, coughing loudly about half a second later when she felt the searing heat trickle down to her stomach. “Whoo! Wh—What was that?! That was strong!” She croaked out, clutching at the burning sensation in her throat.

Byron raised an eyebrow and gestured to the empty glass in her hand, trying to keep a giggling Cherry-Lyn secure in his arms. “That was bourbon, Harry. Straight.” He told her, looking amused when she seemed to still be keeling from the effects of the said liquor.

Glancing around the room, she looked back at him and gave him a grin. “Where’s the rest of it? Where do you get that drink? That was... Good stuff...” She mused, her eyes traveling to the numerous house-elves who were roaming the ballroom.

The metamorphagus looked slightly worried at this but answered her anyway, his voice sounding uncertain and hesitant. “You can ask for it from the open bar. But I don’t recommend you drink too much of that, you should know that women get drunk faster than men.” He warned as her gaze shifted to the bar at the end of the ballroom, a smirk gracing her lips.

“I’m a woman, I’m about to be married and I’m about to be bloody PREGNANT all in a span of two years time! Try doing that, Byron and then we’ll talk about drinking too much.” She drawled, narrowing her

eyes at his nervous grimace before she stalked off and headed directly towards the bar.

“So...Zabini...Aren't you going to introduce us to your lovely date...?” Markus Princeton asked from the corner of the ballroom where several pureblooded heirs had gathered in a small crowd, offering Blaise a glass of brandy. Returning his smirk with a nod, Blaise simply nodded and took a sip, ignoring the teasing grins he was receiving from the other purebloods around him.

“Gentlemen, this is Hermione Granger. She's a Hogwarts debutante...Top of her class, Head girl.” He introduced, smirking at the blush that erupted on a lavender-gown clad Hermione's face at his appraising words.

“Are you friends with Draco's fiancé, Hermione?” Quentin Palamore asked with a curious smirk, raising an eyebrow as Hermione managed a smile and nodded, accepting a glass of wine from Blaise's offered hand.

“She's been best friends with Potter even before Draco could approach her...” Blaise quipped, causing the other men around them to chuckle in amusement. Before anyone could respond, another bachelor joined them – a dark-haired, beady-eyed pureblood Hermione knew only as Parker Finkleman.

“Draco's fiancé is bloody gorgeous! Lucky bastard! Who knew the bloody boy-who-lived would turn out this hot as a woman?! Have you seen that body?! What I wouldn't give to get a piece of that arse—”

“Excuse me?! I beg your pardon—” Hermione's angry tirade was cut off when Parker spoke up again as though he hadn't heard her, turning his suggestive leer to Blaise and failing to see the look of pure distaste on the other aristocrat's face.

“I reckon Draco would have to be careful with her...Damn bastard. Hey, she might end up getting kidnapped or something...Eh, Zabini?” He drawled snidely with a scoff, causing Blaise to stiffen at the mention of the word 'kidnap'.

“Care to join us, Finkleman...?” Richard Townsend suddenly commented sarcastically, meeting Edward Haskin’s eyes – both of them sneering at each other in unspoken agreement. The other men around them seemed to stiffen at Parker’s arrival and sneered at the other man in obvious dislike.

“Now why would you say something like that...Finkleman? What do you mean by kidnap...?” William Malfoy asked in a low, suspicious voice, oblivious to the way Hermione’s eyes had also narrowed at Finkleman’s words in thought.

The other pureblood merely sneered and shrugged, taking a long sip of his vodka. “Nothing really...I just figured that...Kidnapping is just so rampant among pureblooded society these days, isn’t it?” He asked, causing Blaise’s eyes to flash furiously at him in warning.

“Finkleman, I suggest you keep your disrespectful mouth shut before I shove my fist into it and knock your teeth out—”

“Am I missing something here?” Hermione asked uncertainly, interrupting Blaise’s angry growl and directing her question to William, watching as the youngest Malfoy son looked slightly uncomfortable at her open question.

The other purebloods shifted their gaze away from the Italian heir in question, suddenly interested in staring either at their drinks or at the other passing guests around them. It wasn’t until a minute later that William spoke again, his voice sounding restrained.

“Blaise’s younger sister was kidnapped about a year ago. She was held for ransom and the Zabinis had to pay off a huge amount of money. Isabella is still traumatized and she can’t speak at all...” William finally explained after a moment of silence, causing a flicker of pain in Blaise’s dark eyes.

Hermione’s eyes widened and she turned sharply to look at Blaise’s face, watching his eyes harden in self-protection. “Blaise, you never told me about that—”

“Leave it, Granger.” He snapped, causing her to wince at the sharp tone of his voice. She was just about to apologize when they all heard a soft, sultry voice speak up behind them, causing all the other men around them to look up and stare in shock.

“Blaise Zabini...Is that you...? How dare you stand there and not ask me to dance...?”

Blaise and Hermione both turned sharply around, the latter’s eyes narrowing sharply at the sight of the stunningly beautiful Italian redhead who was now wrapping her arms around Blaise’s neck with a little too much familiarity for Hermione’s liking.

Raising her eyes up to meet the apologetic look on Blaise’s face, Hermione watched with an awkward glare as the redhead flashed a sultry smile at the other men – well aware of the fact that all their eyes were roaming up and down her curvaceous body exposed by the sexy cut of her gown.

“Vittoria...Always a pleasure. You look as sexy and gorgeous as ever...” Finkleman smirked as he strode forward and took her hand, raising it to his lips. Vittoria smirked and simply inclined her head, her long lashes fluttering elegantly at him in greeting.

“Vittoria...What are you doing here? Shouldn’t you be in Italy...?” Blaise asked through clenched teeth, untangling her arms from his neck and pushing her slightly away from him. Unfortunately, all Hermione saw from this was the fact that Blaise now had his hands placed on the sexy curve of redhead’s hips and she stiffened, glaring at the Slytherin accusingly.

“Who is this, Blaise...?” She asked with narrowed brown eyes, stiffening further when Vittoria finally noticed her presence and stared down at her with narrowed lashes, her lips pursing into a sneer of dislike. Noting that the Italian woman stood at a marvelous height of 5’10 – just about Blaise’s height – Hermione scowled further and took a step back in intimidation.

“Hermione, this is Vittoria de Luca...She’s the heiress of the de Luca family of Milan, Italy. She’s just a friend of mine—”

“Blaise and I have been...playmates...since before we could do magic...” She spoke with a naturally intoned sexuality in her voice that made the other men watching smirk, their faces leering at the Italian heiress’ exotic beauty.

Seeing the displeased scowl on Hermione’s face, Blaise cleared his throat – untangling himself from Vittoria’s slender figure. “Our parents are distant cousins you see, so—”

“And who are you...?” Vittoria suddenly asked rudely, her perfectly made up eyes sweeping once over Hermione’s form before she sneered snobbishly and flipped her luscious red hair over her shoulder. “Never mind that...It doesn’t matter who you are.” She interrupted before Hermione could answer her, rolling her eyes with a scoff.

Turning to Blaise, she ignored the glare Hermione sent her and smiled, fluttering her eyelashes up at him. “Blaise, you’re going to dance with me now. It’s been so long since I’ve danced with someone who matches my skill...And I’ve missed having you wrapped around me.” She drawled in her darkly seductive tone of voice, smirking when she saw the aroused faces of the other men around them.

“Vittoria, why are you even here?” Blaise retorted rudely, shoving her hands away from him and causing the girl to blink at him in slight shock.

“Your Uncle Giovanni invited me, Blaise...He discussed a possible match between the two of us this season with my father. I can’t say I’m completely against it, I always did think we made a good match. After all, we did have a pretty hot and heavy relationship until you broke up with me—”

“You’re the bloody reason my sister got kidnapped! If you had just been watching her like I asked you to that afternoon instead of flirting with my best friend, nothing would have happened!” Blaise suddenly exploded, causing Vittoria to blink and step back in slight affront.

“In my defense, Draco Malfoy was flirting with me—”

“He was with his grandmother for Merlin’s sake!”

“Excuse me.”

Blaise stopped his angry tirade and tore his eyes away from Vittoria just in time to see Hermione hastily excusing herself from the crowd and stalking off towards the opposite side of the ballroom, her face set into a scowl and her arms crossed over her chest.

“Granger, wait! Look, this isn’t what it looks like!” Blaise sighed and excused himself from his smirking friends, ignoring Vittoria’s indignant calls after him as he tore after the Gryffindor, managing to catch up to her as she reached the middle of the dance floor.

“Hermione! I said wait damn it! Don’t be so dramatic!” He growled, halting the brunette in her tracks by grasping her arm and spinning her around to face him, wincing when he was met with the angry flashing in her normally warm brown eyes.

“Why should I?! You seemed content enough to be with your leggy, bare-backed, half-naked Italian heiress back there so I thought I should just—just—Argh!” She stomped her foot on the floor in speechless frustration, glaring at him with slightly teary eyes.

“Are you quite finished...?” Blaise asked with an affectionate smirk at her flushed, angry face, holding back a laugh when Hermione glared up at him, her bottom lip quivering unknowingly with barely restrained emotions.

“A—Are you laughing at me?! Blaise Zabini, this is not funny! If you’d much rather be with that Victoria—”

“Vittoria.”

“Whatever! If you’d much rather be with her, I’m sure I could easily find someone else to escort me around for the rest of the night!” Her voice broke off when he began laughing again and pulled her away from the dance floor to an isolated corner of the room, obviously amused by her antics.



“Granger, you are exaggerating. Vittoria is a thing of the past and if you would only give me a couple of minutes to introduce you to someone—”

“Another one? Who are going to introduce this time?! Another ex-girlfriend?! Are you going to tell me a little later on that you’re engaged to her and that you’d rather marry her because she’s a pureblood and she’s rich and she’s—”

“I am not engaged to anyone! At least not yet! Alright?! Now bloody hell, just listen to me for one second—”

“I will not listen to you! Ron and Harry were right! Perhaps we really were just wasting time with each other! I shouldn’t have allowed you to start this stupid game! And what do you mean not yet?! Who are you planning to—” Hermione’s rushed, furious tirade was finally broken when Blaise leaned down and pressed his lips against hers, catching her completely off guard with a searing kiss.

After several moments, he pulled back and chuckled at the look of shock on her blushing face, watching her struggling to find the right words to say. Once she recovered from her embarrassment, she finally spoke up – blinking in confusion at Blaise’s smirking face.

“Blaise, what—”

The question died on her lips as a small young girl walked up behind Blaise, causing the Slytherin to smile and step slightly aside so Hermione could see the small velvet box held in the girl’s hand. Looking down at the little girl in speechless stupor, Hermione watched her smile shyly and raise the velvet box up to her, waiting for her to accept it.

Holding back a choked-up, teary laugh, Hermione turned to meet Blaise’s mischievous grin and managed a small, weak smile. “Is this Isabella...?” She asked, smiling wider when he nodded and reached down to ruffle the said girl’s dark tresses, taking the velvet box from her outstretched hand.

“Yep...This is my little sister, Isabella Zabini. Isabella, this is Hermione Granger...” He introduced gently, leaning down to plant a kiss on the top of the little girl’s head. Isabella smiled up at Hermione again, her free hand locking tightly with her brother’s hand.

Then, chuckling, Blaise flipped the box open and held it up to Hermione’s flushed face – watching with a smile as the look in her eyes softened in realization. “Now...I know Draco would kill me for doing this tonight...So let’s keep this between the two of us for now...Hermione Granger...” He knelt down onto the floor beside Isabella, raising the diamond ring up to her face.

“Will you do me the honor of marrying me and being the next Zabini heiress...?”

It took Hermione a couple of minutes of staring at the exquisite diamond ring he slipped onto her finger, her eyes wide and shining with happiness. Then, kneeling down to look into Isabella’s shy smile, she pointedly looked away from Blaise and reached over to tap the little girl on the cheek.

“Well...If I must, I suppose...But only if Isabella over here teaches me how to dance like one.” She teased, laughing when Isabella looked up at her with a genuine smile and nodded eagerly, reaching over and tugging excitedly on her hand.

Blaise laughed at this and just as his sister began pulling Hermione onto the dance floor, the Gryffindor turned and smiled back at him, leaning forward and meeting his lips in a sweet, chaste kiss.

“About time, Zabini...”

A little later that night, a flustered Hermione dragged Ron over to where they finally found Harry lounging by the bar at the end of the ballroom. As soon as the black-haired Gryffindor had seen them, she shot them both a wide, cheerful smile and waved madly, accidentally knocking the bottle of vodka on the bar onto the floor.

“Whoopshie! Oh no! I broked the bottle of v—vo—whasshat called?! V—Vok-ka!” She slurred, hopping off her stool and bending down to

pick up the pieces of the broken bottle off the floor. Hermione cast a worried look at Ron they approached their best friend.

Before she could pull herself back up, Harry giggled and accidentally keeled over, stumbling on her heels. She would have ended up sprawled on the floor along the broken glass had Ron not reached over and grasped her by her arm, supporting her back up onto her feet.

Turning around to face him, Harry shot him a wide, infectious smile and slung an arm around his shoulders. "Aw... Well aren't you jusht dashing, Ronald? 'Er-my-knee! You look...boo-ti-ful!" She exclaimed, bursting out into a fit of giggles as Hermione gave her a reluctant smile of gratitude.

"Er...Thank you, Harry...You look beautiful too. We've been looking all over for you. We wanted to congrat – Harry James Potter, are you DRUNK?!" She asked accusingly, reaching over and grasping her arm as well but Harry just giggled again and shrugged their arms off, stumbling over to collapse back onto her stool.

Ron turned to look at Hermione as though she was the stupidest person in the world. "Are you daft, Hermione?! Of course she's drunk! She's obviously gone completely mental! I'd be drunk all over the bloody bar too if I had to marry a pompous arse like Malfoy—"

"Aw, pshaw! Whaddya guyshh talkin bout? I'm fiiiine! I'm not drunked! I'm more than fine, I'm sh—sh—shtupended! H—Here! Ya want shome vok-ka?" She slurred, twirling her stool around to reach for the vodka bottle. Realizing it was on the floor; she giggled, spun around on her stool again, and shrugged her shoulders.

"Harry, you just broke the bottle of vodka on the floor so I don't think you can offer us anything. And I think you mean stupendous." Hermione said pointedly, glaring at Ron when the redhead looked like he was trying to hold in a round of hysterical laughter.

"Mate, you're drunk as codger. I realize this is your engagement party and everything but couldn't you have at least waited until after dinner had been served before getting wasted?" Ron asked, grinning when

Harry didn't seem to hear him and was too busy spinning her stool around, swinging her feet, and trying to drink her glass of vodka at the same time.

"Wheeee! Theeshhh thingshh are fun! We shhould get shairs like zeese in our classhrooms eh?! It'll make Poshuns more funner!" She exclaimed in a high-pitched voice, swinging her legs higher from where they dangled over the floor as she continued to spin the stool around.

Ron was obviously still trying very hard not to laugh but Hermione wasn't amused at all at her best friend's antics – especially given that a lot of guests were beginning to stare at the supposed celebrant of the party who was now looking through the empty tequila bottle like it was a telescope.

Hermione was just about to snatch it from her hand when Harry suddenly turned and aimed the bottom end of the bottle at her face, allowing the frustrated Head Girl a glimpse of Harry's wide green eye at the mouth of the glass container.

"Ooooh, Er-my-kneee....I sheeeee yooooo!" She slurred in a high, sing-song voice, causing Ron to snort and choke on his glass of wine, hastily turning away to avoid Hermione's narrowed glare at him. The drunken savior of the wizarding world was just about to reach for another full glass of vodka when Hermione snatched it out of her hands, handing it to Ron with a firm shake of her head.

"Heeeeey....Thash...mine!" Harry pouted, trying to cross her arms over her chest but she ended up getting confused as to which arm went around which so she settled for placing her hands on her hips instead, giving the other girl a drunken glare with fluttered eyelids.

With an exasperated sigh, Hermione rushed forward and began fixing the slightly disarranged necklace around Harry's neck, forcing the other girl's legs primly back together in a more modest position to accommodate the hemline of her dress.

"Harry, stop drinking for one minute okay?!! I have great news for the both of you. I'm—"

“Hey Mione! You’re a...women right? Women? Wo...Womans? Whashever...Yah are right? Where do babiesh come from?” The boy-turned-girl-who-lived suddenly asked as Hermione took another glass of vodka from her hand and set it back down onto the bar counter.

Blushing at the sudden, unexpected question, the Head Girl turned wide eyes to Harry and promptly choked out an answer. “Excuse me? What was that, Harry?” She asked, looking to Ron for support but he hastily tore his gaze away and was already gesturing to the bartender behind the bar for a stronger drink, purposely avoiding both girls’ faces.

“Babiesh! Ya know...Tiny people! Where do they pop out of a women? Woman! Do they jushh.. ‘ting!’ and appear? Or do they....’whooosh!’ and...’ZOOOOM!’ out of your arssh or something?” She murmured, her green eyes looking slightly disoriented as she tilted her head to the side and stared up at the brunette’s horrified, pale face.

Hermione sputtered for the right words to say, ignoring Ron’s choking laughter behind her. “Harry! Children do not pop out...there! I’m sure you know that children are conceived through sex so it’s only natural that they come out the same way...sperm...went in...You know that, Harry! It’s...biology!” She attempted to explain further but she blushed when Ron nearly spit out his drink in his utter hilarity.

“Biology! It’s bloody primary knowledge, it is! If there’s anything we men know, it’s where sperm comes in!” He blurted out with a snigger, crying out loud in pain when he was answered by Hermione painfully punching his shoulder.

Harry didn’t seem to understand Ron’s heavy laughter and stared at him with narrowed eyes, her hand already reaching over towards another full glass of liquor on the bar. “Washhh so funny? Ish a sherious question! I wanna know thish stuffs! Byron telled...tolded...said to me that I wush tuh be pregnant shometime next year and bear a kid! M—Malfoy trition!” She told them pointedly, causing Ron to blink and give Hermione a confused look.

“Triton?” He asked, raising an eyebrow and the brunette gave him another pointed glare before answering. “Tradition. Is that why you got yourself drunk on your own engagement party? Come on, I’m taking you away from this bar before you mess yourself up even more.” Hermione gave a heavy sigh and pulled the black-haired Gryffindor to her feet, wincing when Harry stumbled clumsily against her with another giggle.

“Whoopshie! Sorry, Er-My-Knee! Shtupid heels! I should take them off—” Harry cut herself off and ignored Hermione’s loud protests as she promptly bent forward and began to unlace the strappy laces of her designer stilettos. Once they were off, she gave a loud whoop and tossed them aside, unwittingly hitting a random house-elf nearby on the head and causing the poor creature to drop the tray of glasses balanced on his hands noisily onto the floor.

At the loud crash, a couple more heads turned toward them and watched as Hermione slung the prime debutante’s arm over her shoulder and supported her back up on her feet. She shot the disapproving guests a nervous smile in a gesture of reassurance but it didn’t seem to take their gazes off the future Malfoy heiress who was now putting a shot of bourbon into her small black purse.

“Harry! What are you doing?!” Hermione gasped, looking over in horror as Harry grinned proudly and shut her purse with a snap, slinging it wildly over her shoulder.

“Heeeey! finally fi-gurd out washh theesh tiny purses are for! Now I haff something tuh keep my drink in! Lookie! Whoopsh...” Her voice trailed off as the drink in her purse must have spilled onto the fabric and eventually started dripping to the crowd, causing both Ron and Hermione to cringe at the mess.

“Mate...As hilariously entertaining I find you right now, Hermione’s right. You’re going to make things worse. Come on; let’s get you over to your table.” Ron muttered as he finally relented and supported Harry on her opposite side, shaking his head when his best friend merely giggled at their efforts and ruffled Ron’s hair drunkenly in response.

“Whoo...Your hair remindshh me of a carrot I ate yesterday...”

Before Ron could growl at her for the annoyingly senseless remark, the drunken Gryffindor suddenly exclaimed again – her eyes beaming brightly when she noticed a group of guests near the center of the room. “Hey! It’s Shheamus – hic – and Dean! Awwww! They’re shooo cuuute together eh?!” She shouted loudly over the soft jazz music, causing some of the guests to look at her in disapproval as she staggered clumsily across the dance floor toward them.

“Wait, Harry! Come back here!” Ron cried out in exasperation as he hurried after her, excusing himself hastily when he bumped into several silver-blond aristocrats he could only assume were more Malfoy relatives. Giving them a nervous grin and hastily muttered apology, he weaved his way through the dance floor and rushed after his best friend, holding back another laugh when he saw her slinging each arm around both Dean and Seamus’ shoulders.

“Sheamy! Deanie! Wassshaaap? How are you guyshh doin?” She slurred loudly, giggling and leaning over to plant a kiss on both her friends’ cheeks.

Seamus grinned knowingly at Ron over her shoulder while Dean simply cocked an eyebrow questioningly at Hermione. The brunette sighed and shook her head, indicating to the bar across the room and nodding towards Harry’s flushed cheeks.

“Don’t ask, Dean...Harry’s got herself drunk somehow before dinner even began. Her slurring is getting a lot worse though...” She groaned as she approached them, wincing once more when Harry stumbled back toward her and answered her with a tight, enthusiastic hug.

“And I feel....guhrrrreat! Seamus! You look spificly happy tuh shee me! Would you like to join me for a tango??” She murmured, ignoring Ron’s snort of laughter when Dean seemed to open his mouth in protest only to be interrupted by Seamus’ laughing response.

“I would love to, Harry...” He said with a smirk, chuckling at the scowl on Dean’s face and the look of obvious exasperation on Hermione’s.

“Harry, I didn’t even know you could dance the tango! Come on, I’ll take you to Malfoy so you could—”

Ignoring Hermione’s protest, the black-haired Gryffindor grinned and seized the Irish Gryffindor by his hand, yanking him towards the dance floor. Even Dean had to laugh when Harry forced Seamus into a Tango position and began to drag him across the floor through the sea of waltzing dancers – their movements causing the other guests to miss their steps and bump into each other in disruption.

After about ten seconds of staring at the scene in horror, Hermione finally relented and burst out laughing, shaking her head at the comical sight. Seamus promptly transfigured the flower pinned on his tuxedo into a rose and clutched it with his teeth, raising his eyebrows up and down.

This continued for several more minutes until the pair had eventually bumped into every other dancing pair on the dance floor, earning themselves several glares and muttered insults from the other pureblooded guests. Just as Ron was going to comment about how surprising he found it that Harry actually danced well despite her drunken state, he winced when they heard a familiar growl behind them, causing all three Gryffindors to whirl around in surprise.

“What the bloody hell is going on here?!”

Draco Malfoy looked completely livid as he stalked towards them from across the ballroom, his silver eyes an angry, near-black shade just as he stopped in front of Dean and grasped the darker man by the front of his tuxedo.

“Why does your half-breed boyfriend have his filthy paws all over MY fiancé?!” He growled as he easily lifted Dean up by the collar of his jacket until his feet dangled several inches from the floor, causing the Gryffindor to let out a helpless squeak of fear.

When Dean couldn’t seem to find himself capable of saying anything in response – whether from fear at the murder in Draco’s eyes or



from the fact that he was having trouble not staring at the handsome blonde, he wasn't sure.

Instead, he gulped loudly and turned wide eyes from Draco's blazing silver orbs to Hermione and forced himself to speak up in a cracking voice.

"H—Help!"

"Draaaaaay—co—bear! Theeere's my darling fiancé! I've been lookin all ovhers for yoooo!" Jaimee squealed in a high pitched voice as she tore herself from Seamus' arms and dashed over to the irate Slytherin, flinging both her arms around his neck.

Draco's grip on Dean's collar instantly loosened, allowing the smaller man to collapse onto the floor and cough out for breath. As Seamus rushed over to him to help him back up, Ron smirked widely and pulled Hermione back from the scene, his eyes flicking over to Draco to watch the blonde's reaction to his apparently newly created nickname.

The anger in the Draco's normally cold eyes had immediately flickered out and in its place was dumbfounded shock and dismay, his taunting sneer fading until his jaw eventually dropped in flabbergasted, speechless stupor.

"Wh—What did you call me?!"

"Mmmmmm...You alwayshh shhhmell shooooo good, Coco-Bear...I could jussht eat you up!" Harry slurred again before wrapping herself tighter around him and burying her face into his neck, forcing all the blood into Draco's cheeks when Ron and Seamus both burst out into loud laughter.

"Coco-bear?" Hermione asked, her lips twitching in helpless amusement when Harry pulled back and grinned at her, nodding enthusiastically in affirmation.

"He's like an enormic...gigantous...Er...BIG life-shized teddy bear!!! 'Cept hish namesh's not Teddy you know!" She huffed in a chastising

tone of voice; oblivious to the evident, speechless, stupefied trance Draco had fallen into as she turned and buried her face against his neck once more.

“Sho obvusly ish more proper tuh call him Coco-Bear! He’sshhh mine!” She squealed happily, giggling against him as Draco finally blinked himself out of his shock and forced himself to meet Hermione’s smirk despite the horrible flush on his cheeks.

When the embarrassment on his face dissolved and was replaced by anger, his piercing gaze flicked back and forth between the four Gryffindors in cold, calculating silence.

“My fiancé is drunk at her own engagement party. Who’s responsible for this?” He asked in a deathly calm voice, trying to contain his temper. Due to the fact that there were several people watching the proceedings in avid interest, he forced his voice into a soft murmur although this did nothing to betray the fury that was threatening to erupt from him.

Before anyone could answer him, he tensed when Harry began cooing and giggling against his chest, one of her long legs locking playfully around his while her soft hands began moving downwards to explore certain parts of him that weren’t particularly meant to be explored in view of his friends and relatives.

Forcing himself to pull away from her, he held her at arm’s length and tried to ignore the fact that the blood that had colored his cheeks in embarrassment was now slowly rushing south at her ministrations. When he turned his glare back to her friends, Dean and Seamus hastily excused themselves and hurried off towards the other Gryffindors near the refreshment table –eager to escape the Slytherin’s evident wrath.

“What’s wrong, Coco-Bear? Personally, I think she’s amusing. She might even liven up this boring funeral you call an engagement party.” Ron blurted out loudly in a mocking voice, ignoring the disapproving glare Hermione sent him at his jibe.

Draco had to bite back a creative stream of words that were threatening to erupt from his mouth at the redhead's comment, sighing in frustration when Harry broke out of his hold and rushed toward him again, burying her face into his chest and wrapping her arms securely around his waist.

He bit back a frustrated growl when she giggled contentedly and leaned her face upwards against him, pressing a kiss onto the pulse point of his neck and causing the stirrings of another arousal to erupt within his traitorous body.

"We're really sorry, Draco. She was already drunk when we found her...She must have been at the bar for quite some time. She should mellow out after about an hour or so once she takes in proper food. Why don't you keep a hold on her for awhile?" Hermione suggested, biting back another smile when Draco stiffened and gently pushed Harry away from him again.

Looking down to see her pouting up at him with glassy eyes, Draco felt his anger instantly melt away and he finally allowed a small reluctant smile, raising his arm up and offering it to her. "Come on my little drunk foolish fiancé, let's get you sober. I have to introduce you to more relatives during dinner time; I can't have you acting this way." He drawled, quirking an eyebrow when Ron and Hermione made to walk back to the table assigned for Harry's friends at the other side of the room.

"And where the bloody hell do you two think you're going?" He asked them sharply, looking irritated as both Gryffindors whirled around in confusion and gave him a questioning glare.

"We're going back to our table for dinner—"

"You're going the wrong way." Draco interrupted Hermione's confused response, sneering at their obvious confusion when he gestured to the main center table near the front of the ballroom. "You two are to be seated at the head table with us at Harry's request. Personally, I'd like to see you far across the room away from my very sight and Raine, Weasel...But it appears I have no choice in the

matter.” He drawled icily, sneering wider when Ron’s eyes darkened in anger.

“You bastard—”

“I’m hun-greeeeeeee!” Harry complained loudly, tugging impatiently on Draco’s arm and whisking him off towards their table before Ron could finish his sentence, oblivious to the look of immense relief on Hermione’s face.

Just as she and Ron were about to make their way over to their seats, she heard Draco voice exclaim loudly over the jazz background music ahead of them, causing several more heads to turn towards their direction.

“Potter, what the bloody hell happened to your shoes?!”

“...My Uncle Claudius. He’s Byron’s father...Uncle Sebastian...Nadine and Reggie’s father and Uncle Pritchard – William, Alex and Elaine’s father...You already know Uncle Louis of course.” Draco introduced to Harry one by one later that night, gesturing to the elder Malfoys at the end of the table. Harry grinned and waved cheerfully to them with the hand she used to hold her fork, causing Draco to wince when the food on it accidentally fell to the floor.

“Markus Princeton, Quentin Palamore, and Richard Townsend...Alex’s, Nadine’s and Elaine’s husbands respectively. To their right are my Aunts – Aunt Clarisse, my godmother Aunt Lyla, and Aunt Stacie.” Draco continued hesitantly, pointing to each relative and watching as nods and smiles were interchanged.

“She’s very beautiful, Draco...Though a little bit...eccentric...isn’t she?” Lyla drawled in a thick French accent, causing Draco to smile uncertainly and look back at Jaimee. His smile faded when he saw that she was now holding up her glass of water above her head and was peering up at the bottom of the class, her eyes wide in child-like wonderment.

“Ooooh...Pretty...”

Pointedly deciding that perhaps family introductions would be best continued later, Draco sighed and grabbed the glass of water from Harry's hand, setting it back down onto the table. An awkward silence fell upon them after that until Narcissa suddenly spoke up again, her blue eyes flicking from her plate of salad to the other woman across from her.

"So Regina...How are the proceedings coming along regarding your divorce...?"

Sirius cast a dark, warning glare at his cousin but Narcissa ignored him, her perfectly curled lashes peering down at Regina's embarrassed face. "Oh...! Well, I uhm... It's going quite well, actually. The papers should be finalized by next month so by then, I'll officially have my old name and life back." She answered evenly, forcing a smile as she met the bored, lazy smirks of more Malfoys seated around them at the main table.

Several seats down in the very middle of the long rectangular table, Draco and Harry were watching and listening to conversations around them as they ate their meals. Beside them sat Ron, Hermione, Blaise, Lorraine, Byron and Anton, all of which were also eating their food in silence.

Lucius and Narcissa sat right across their son – diagonally from Sirius and Regina. Across them, Lawrence and Genevieve were conversing softly with one another, pausing every now and then to take delicate bites of their food.

More Malfoy cousins and their respective spouses or families were seated after Sirius' seat along the other side. The Zabini, Parkinson and Winchester heads and their families were also seated amongst them, including Philippe and more of Draco's fellow pureblooded heirs.

Unlike the other tables tinged with lively chatter and laughter around the ballroom, however, their table was unusually and awkwardly quiet. The only sound that was heard was the occasional clinking of their utensils along the expensive plates.

Looking up from her plate, Nadine Malfoy suddenly spoke up from where she sat beside her husband, ignoring the quelling look he was giving her. "How is your daughter taking the divorce? Does she understand anything yet?" She asked tactlessly, earning a glare from Draco.

Regina smiled, however, and shook her head, her eyes flicking over to meet Sirius' apologetic grimace. "Oh no, she's fine. She was never close to Nigel anyway. Besides, she's happy the way we are right now." She explained, chuckling before taking a pristine bite of her Crab and Shrimp Salad.

As this conversation continued amongst the adults, an evidently still drunk Harry leaned over to whisper something into Draco's ear. "What ish thish rubbish?" She asked, making a face at her Escargot a La Bourguignonne and blowing a loud raspberry at her plate in dislike.

Instead of answering her, Draco flinched instinctively at the sound and turned to offer a nervous grin when his mother and father – as well as most of the other people around the table – broke from the current conversation and turned to stare at the couple in confusion.

Forcing a laugh, he gave them all a charming smile and pointedly offered Harry the handkerchief in his pocket. "Sorry. She sneezed...Adorable little sound isn't it?" He supplied with a quirky shrug, breathing in an inward sigh of relief when – with the exception of Ron and Hermione – they all seemed to accept his explanation and turned back to their discussion.

Just as the blonde turned back to his fiancé, he growled and snatched a new glass of wine from her hand, setting it down on his opposite side away from her reach. After a couple more minutes of trying to listen to his parents' new conversation with the Winchesters about possible dates for Lorraine's wedding, he looked at Harry again, groaning when he saw her now happily doodling a smiley face onto her escargot dish with the contents of a soy sauce bottle.

Bloody idiot! At this rate, any fool would notice she's drunk! Draco thought to himself in irritation, shaking his head when Harry giggled again and added a moustache to her smiley face, following it up by sticking a small carrot vertically right in the center of the face as a nose.

"Potter, what has gotten into you?!" He snapped at her in a low hiss so as not to be heard, watching as the Gryffindor blinked in confusion for several seconds to process his words. Once she understood his question, she buried her face into hands and burst out into drunken giggles.

"What?! What's funny now?!" Draco hissed again, reaching over to pull her hands away from her flushed face only to be met with her half-dazed, half-suggestive leer.

"You."

Draco blinked several times, clearly not understanding her answer.

"Excuse me?"

She smirked again, hiccupping once before opening her mouth to answer him. "You, Malfoy...You've gotten – hic – into me." She murmured seductively into his ear, unknowingly causing Draco's cheeks to instantly flame in lust at her words.

Turning back sharply to the conversation around them, Draco barely heard his father's laughter or the comments he was receiving from his friends as he concentrated more on keeping the searing heat in his body away from his lower half.

Stupid Potter! It's just like the stupid git to pull a stunt like this! Don't think of sex, don't think of sex, don't – argh! Draco thought furiously, failing to see the knowing smirks he was receiving from Byron and the look of pure amusement he saw from Blaise.

Draco didn't care how long he had to endure this. No matter what happened, he was going to make damn sure that neither of their guests – most especially his family – found out that his fiancé was

drunk as a skunk and was now concentrating on playing footsie with him under the table.

Mmm...Silk sheets...Bedroom...Table...DAMMIT! Draco cursed and shook his head furiously as his thoughts drifted again, forcing himself to turn and give Harry a well-practiced, withering glare that would have sent anyone else running for their life.

He winced when she reached for her drink and accidentally knocked her glass of water over, spilling the contents onto the table. When she clumsily reached her napkin over to wipe up the spill, Draco failed to notice the water trailing a slow path toward him until he eventually felt the trickling of ice water dripping onto the front of his pants.

He nearly shot up from his seat at the blast of cold but stopped when Harry smiled seductively again and reached her napkin over towards his lap, giving him a half-drunk, half-apologetic smile. "Woopshie! I'm shorry! Let me get shat for you, Coco-Bear—"

"I'm fine, Potter! R—really I am! Don't – argh!" Draco immediately stiffened in absolute shock when he felt her soft hands diving down and wiping the water off his pants, her fingers stroking the inside of his thigh and moving dangerously close to his crotch.

DEAR GOD...He thought, holding back a pathetic whimper when he felt his arousal instantly spring back to life full force.

Gritting his teeth, he clamped a furious hand tightly over her bare thigh in warning for her to stop. Unfortunately, the gesture seemed to backfire on him and Harry ended up squealing loudly instead, collapsing into another fit of giggles.

"That tickles!"

"Draco, darling...? Is everything alright there, sweetie?" Narcissa spoke up from their conversation, looking towards their direction at her son's red face and Harry's hysterical giggling.

Hastily yanking his hand away from her leg, Draco's normally stoic features seemed to contort in restrained agony as Harry's hand slid



seductively onto his thigh again. Biting his lip, the blonde's eyes went wide and his cheeks flushed pink in an effort to calm himself down.

"I'm fine, mother. Just a private joke Jaimee and I shared..." He managed to say in a steady voice, giving his mother a reassuring smile. Once she had turned back to talk to her other friends, Draco forced himself to listen to the rest of their conversation – pointedly ignoring Harry beside him.

"So Black...Are you formally courting Regina?" Lucius asked with a wry smile, smirking when Sirius – blissfully oblivious to the fact that his goddaughter was making her poor fiancé squirm as much as she could – reddened in surprise.

"Uhm – Well, that is...We're friends and..."

Draco failed to hear the rest of Sirius' response.

A rather evil smile flitted across Harry's face as she coyly bit her lip and looked at him through fluttered eyelashes, tracing a single finger along the zipper of his pants under the table. Her bare foot sidled up along his ankles, slipping under his socks to rub with his own.

"Oh Draaaaaay—Co..."

"Potter, STOP IT! I mean it!" He hissed at her, flushing and trying in vain to move away from her hand.

"...Lawrence, you must tell me when you go to the country club so we could meet up..."

A breathless gasp almost escaped Draco's lips when Harry grabbed his hand, brought it down under the table and placed it back on her bare thigh, guiding it up her slender leg and stopping just as it slipped under the hemline of her skirt.

"...Byron, how goes your studies in Sapientia? I hear you get top marks like Draco..."

Sweet Merlin! Draco screamed desperately in his head, biting back another low moan when Jaimee's delicate little fingers slowly brought the zipper of his pants down and slipped into the waistband of his boxers, teasingly grazing along his navel.

"So...Miss...Granger...? I hear you're the Head Girl at Hogwarts...How is the academic system of Hogwarts? Hard...?"

Oh it's hard alright...Hard, definitely hard! Draco thought furiously, fighting to keep a straight face as he continued to nod senselessly at the ongoing conversations, pausing every now and then to utter a single word response to signify that he was still listening.

"...I hear you're going to go into politics, Anton...? Is that true...? What do you think, Draco?"

"Hmm...? O—oh, I—I'd like to go into something myself..." Draco answered shakily, quickly looking away to hide his red face from their confused faces at his rather odd answer.

He practically bit his tongue when Harry slipped her hand into his boxers, boldly grabbing his bulging arousal and causing the Malfoy heir to give an involuntarily jerk of surprise. Again, Blaise, Byron and Hermione's gazes flicked to him but he ignored them and quickly averted his eyes to Harry.

To his indignation, the bloody temptress was calmly eating her steak with her other hand – looking incredibly innocent and harmless save for the flushed cheeks that indicated she was still drunk and was currently groping her fiancé under the table.

"...So, Draco...I understand you just finished Machiavelli's The Prince...How was it? Was it insightful?" Alexandra Malfoy spoke up from several seats away the Malfoy heir, raising an eyebrow when Draco turned to give her a distracted smile.

"Hmm...? Oh yeah...I agree completely." He responded hastily, biting his tongue again and focusing all his energy into crushing the vegetables on his plate into mulch.

Alexandra exchanged an irritated look with Elaine before turning to him again, asking the same question in a much louder voice.

“I asked...How was Machiavelli’s novel? Have you picked up any philosophies about leadership and politics from him?” She asked again, waiting impatiently as Draco looked up from his vegetable mulch and forced another shaky smile before opening his mouth to answer her.

Before he could speak, Harry let out a soft laugh under her breath and began to move her hands up and down along his length. This time, Draco could no longer prevent the sound that erupted from him and he gasped, causing his parents to look at him in concern.

“GOOD GOD!”

“Are you okay—”

“I—I’m fine! I meant...The uh...Right! The novel! Machiavelli! I meant GOOD GOD...It was...good...” He paused to swallow the lump forming in his throat. Harry began to move her hand faster and Draco soon found himself shaking, sweating and blushing darker under Alexandra’s scrutinizing, suspicious stare.

“It was... S—so damn good...” He breathed out, his voice shaky and husky as he let the last phrase of his sentence quiver into a helpless whisper.

Alexandra blinked once in annoyance, giving him a disgruntled look before rolling her eyes and turning to back to feed Cherry-Lyn beside her. Luckily enough for Draco, he was saved from future questions when everyone else seemed to erupt into separate discussions around them, successfully taking everyone’s attention off of him.

“...You must tell me who does your hair and make-up, Pansy...”

“...Blaise, darling...You’ve grown up to be a handsome young man...Have you seen Vittoria...?”

“...Lorraine, is it true you’re to be married soon too...?”

“...So how are you friends with Jaimee...?”

Unfortunately, Harry wasn't as fortunate as he was and eventually, Pansy cleared her throat and directed a question to the drunk, black-haired Gryffindor – diverting her attention long enough to allow Draco some time to recover his senses and blink himself out of his lustful haze.

“So...Potter...Since the band has taken a break; perhaps you can regale us all with a display of your musical talent before we eat dessert? I'm sure your future in-laws would very much appreciate it.” She drawled scathingly in a mock-sweet tone of voice, sneering when Jaimee blinked and stared intently at her face in what appeared like deep concentration.

Sirius nearly spit out his drink in shock while Ron promptly began choking on his food, forcing Hermione to cringe and tap him repeatedly on the back. Blaise had grinned at the suggestion, leaning back to watch the impending scene in anticipation.

As soon as the words clicked together in his half-operational mind, Draco paled and hastily shoved Harry's hand away from his pants, pulling his zipper back up and scooting his chair several inches away from her in panic. He ignored the pout she gave him and turned to shoot Pansy a quelling look of anger.

“M—Music?! Pansy, I don't think that's a good idea—”

“What a wonderful idea, Pansy.” Lawrence interrupted, causing the Malfoy heir to snap his mouth shut when several more of his family members looked up at Jaimee and began nodding in earnest, urging the girl on with an expectant smile.

“Yes, Potter...Do show us a bit of that musical talent of yours. If you would be so kind as to play for us an instrument...? I'm sure it would give us – especially Draco – most pleasure.” Lucius added with a smirk, unaware of the flush that once again colored his son's cheeks.

Bloody git was giving me 'most pleasure' all right...And it wasn't because of music. He thought wryly to himself with a helpless shake of his head.

"Father, I don't think—"

"But I don't play any instrume – ooh! Can I sing instead?! I can sing!" Harry suddenly chirped, jumping up from her seat with a beaming smile on her face. Draco's eyes widened in horror before narrowing accusingly at Hermione across the table, causing the Head Girl to shrug back helplessly.

Though the horrible slurring in her speech was gone, it was quite obvious that Harry was still as hazy as ever and Draco was more than certain that if he let her sing now, it wouldn't be long before someone figured out she was drunk.

"Oh gods, Potter please don't! You're in no state to do this! Please come back here before you embarrass us both—"

His suspicions were confirmed when – at the Malfoys' nodding response – she grinned widely and ran towards the grand piano a couple of feet away from their table, stumbling and giggling the entire way. Pointedly ignoring Ron, Byron, and Blaise's wheezing, barely-muffled laughter, Draco gave Pansy a glare that promised her horrors of his anger.

Jaimee's footsteps swayed into dizzy curves as she walked but no one seemed to notice her until she reached the piano the band had been playing and bent down to whisper something to the pianist, giggling when the pianist gave an incredulous laugh before nodding in agreement.

At this point, more and more people around the grand ballroom had stopped their conversations and were now watching curiously as Jaimee giggled and blinked at them from her position on the small stage in front of the grand piano.

Seated in the middle of another large table filled with influential guests, an overjoyed Dumbledore grinned cheerfully and began to

clap, inciting several other watching guests to reluctantly break out into a soft round of applause. Several inquiring murmurs broke out amongst the other people until the room eventually fell into an anticipating silence, all eyes turning to watch the Malfoy heiress grinning at them with twinkling green eyes.

Mother of Merlin...Take me to hell. Draco prayed to himself, burying his face into his hands in utter embarrassment just as he heard a soft, familiar music begin to play. The Malfoys – as well as the other aristocrats around the room – all watched in stunned astonishment as Jaimee held up her wand and ignited the tip, holding it up to her throat to whisper the sonorous charm.

Several seats from him, the shock and horror on Ron and Hermione's faces gave way to large smiles and they laughed, cheering and clapping loudly while beside them, Blaise, Byron and even Anton broke out into chuckles, shaking their head just as Jaimee's soft, melodious voice began to fill the silence of the room.

"Looking out...On the morning rain..." She began, breaking out into soft laughter about a minute later as she was met with the incredulous, stunned faces of nearly everyone in the ballroom.

Draco's face shot up just as Byron spit out his the contents of his drink onto the floor and began to choke in wheezing laughter to be joined shortly by Blaise soon after. Lorraine was biting into her napkin to keep from laughing out loud while Ron's eyes were bulging out, his face red from disbelief.

Jaimee grinned and turned to face their direction, giving them a conspiratorial wink. "I used to feel so uninspired..." She sang, oblivious to the way Pansy's jaw had dropped to the floor when the Slytherin realized that her plan had backfired.

The boy-turned-girl-who-lived was, surprisingly enough, an excellent singer.

At the talented nature of her singing voice, the embarrassed cringe on Draco's face eventually gave way to a small, reluctant smile and he began to laugh, massaging his temples in helpless amusement.

Looking up to watch his family's reaction, he was relieved to see that both Lucius and Lawrence were smirking good-naturedly as well, watching his fiancé continue to sing.

"And when I knew...I had to face another day...Ohhh...Lord, it made me feel...Made me feel so tired..." She continued, closing her eyes and smiling as the piano began to move along more fluidly, allowing for her to sway her hips seductively – and drunkenly – to the music.

This time, Draco began to laugh more sincerely as everyone in the room finally began to cheer in encouragement, clapping and catcalling to show their appreciation of her newfound talent. She giggled again and reached behind her to unclasp her hair, shaking the tresses down and letting it fall seductively down her bare back in graceful waves.

"Before the day I met you...Life was so unkind....But you're the key to my piece of mind..." She sang, her eyelashes fluttering teasingly as she stepped down from the small stage and began sashaying her way towards Draco, making her helplessly laughing fiancé choke in his hilarity when the drunk Gryffindor accidentally tripped on a chair and crashed to the floor.

The pianist stopped playing abruptly in shock. Everyone stopped their cheering and peered from their seats at her in concern, whispering amongst themselves.

Draco – as well as most of the other gentlemen in the room – stood up sharply to help her back up but just as quickly as she had tripped, Jaimee jumped right back up onto her feet with a flourish, a drunk, infectious smile on her face.

"But you're the key to my piece of mind..." She continued to sing cheerfully as though nothing had happened, causing the entire table of Gryffindor guests to burst into laughter when the music promptly started up again, causing everyone to resume their cheers and applause.

Some of the Malfoys looked completely horrified at what was happening while most – including Lawrence and the rest of Lucius'

brothers – looked torn between amusement and mirth, watching the Malfoy heiress' performance with curious smirks.

At this point, Sirius was downing his fifth straight glass of bourbon and was banging his head repeatedly on the table between every glass, his face red with a mixture of anger, disbelief and horror all at once at his goddaughter's actions. Beside him, Regina was giggling and clapping her hands in time with the music.

"She's quite a talented singer and entertainer when she's drunk isn't she?" Lawrence spoke up in a drawl to his wife, turning to Draco and watching his grandson struggling to contain his laughter and breathe at the same time.

Genevieve smiled at this and placed a hand over his fingers, giving them a gentle squeeze. "Oh darling, leave her alone...I haven't seen Draco laugh and smile this much since he was five years old...It's refreshing." She said softly, chuckling when Lawrence inclined his head and leaned down to plant a kiss on her the back of her palm.

Their attention was immediately drawn back to the room's theatrics just as Jaimee finally managed to reach Draco and stopped in front of him, her eyelids fluttering half-closed as she ran a hand seductively through her hair and began to sway very sexily in time with the music.

"Cause you make me feel...You make me feel..." She sang with a naughty smile, giggling when the crowd cheered and laughed again as they caught sight of the amused, helplessly loving grin on Draco's handsome face.

With a final exaggerated flip of her hair, Harry finally collapsed against his lap, straddling him and placing her hands around his shoulders. She grinned when she felt his breath hitch in his throat and his hands place themselves on her waist, pulling her close against him until their foreheads rested against each other.

"You make me feel like a natural woman..."

She followed this up by giggling again and wrapping her arms around his neck so she could arch her body back to expose her neck to him



– pulling his face with her movements until his lips were ghosting over the creamy patch of skin just above the cleavage of breasts.

“Ooh...Baby, what you done to me...?” She whispered, pulling herself back up and pressing their foreheads together once more. Ignoring the louder catcalls and whistles they were receiving from Draco’s male friends, she trailed a single finger down his chest – watching the fires igniting in his eyes.

“Ohhh...You make me feel so...good inside...” She sang, her eyes turning playful as she blinked and looked up at Draco’s face, oblivious to the furious flashing and clicking of the cameras around them. Draco held back a groan of desire and settled his eyes on her lips, his ears ringing with the sound of her beautiful voice.

“And I just want to be...Close to you...Ooooh...You make me feel so alive...”

Draco smirked – blushing in spite of himself at the stares aimed at their direction – and watched as she gave him one last wink before she stood back up, pulling him up with her by the collar of his tux. Despite her drunken state, he smiled fondly and shook his head, pulling her against him just as they heard the pianist play the final notes of the song.

“You make me feel...You make me feel, oooh...You make me feel like a natural...woman...”

Around them, the entire ballroom broke out into loud applause and cheers, watching as Jaimee pulled away from her smirking fiancé and giggled, bowing drunkenly to their acknowledgement with a wide, quirky smile.

“Wooot! Potter, where did you learn to sing like that?! You rock!” Seamus catcalled from their table, putting his fingers to his lips and blowing a very inappropriate wolf whistle. Pansy had huffed and slumped in her chair in frustration, ignoring the consoling pats she received from her parents as they heard the loud cheers, applause, and compliments around the room.

More cameras and frantic clicking was heard while Fred and George Weasley, seated with their family, stood up onto their chairs and began to bark loudly to signify their appreciation. Horrified, Narcissa threw a pleading look at her husband until Lucius signaled several of his trained bodyguards to cease the identical redheads from their actions.

Just as Harry was going to turn around and bow again to the other guests, the drunken-savior-now apparently turned-singer finally seemed to have given out altogether. Her eyes fluttering shut, she gave one last drunken 'thank you' before she promptly fell forward – face first – into Draco's waiting arms.

Still laughing and horrified at the same time at all the attention they were receiving, Draco easily picked up his drunken fiancé and offered a nervous smile towards Sirius's bared teeth and his father's suspiciously narrowed eyes.

"Er...I think she's drunk...?"

"Psst! Ron! Over here!"

Ron nearly dropped the glass of wine he had picked up from the refreshment table in shock, whirling around the sound of the familiar voice. Squinting around the ballroom, his eyes widened when he saw Lorraine beckoning wildly to him from behind a nearby potted plant, her eyes nervously darting around the room.

When Ron raised an eyebrow at her and gave her a questioning look, she rolled her eyes and beckoned to him again, her face growing impatient. "I said come here! Hurry up before Philippe sees me! Come on!" She hissed louder, giving him a look before turning around and heading for the far corner behind several more plants and pillars.

Sighing, Ron finished his glass of wine and set off after her, his eyes checking around him to make sure that no one had seen their little interaction. Fortunately enough, most of the guests were still in an uproar over Harry's little song performance and were discussing animatedly amongst themselves the events that had just happened.

Draco, Sirius and Lucius had left the room about an hour ago with a dozing Harry draped in the Malfoy heir's arms and after checking to make sure his best friend was okay, Ron had set off by himself – rolling his eyes when Blaise claimed Hermione for the first dance after dinner.

Though he was happy for Hermione when she told him about her supposed engagement to the Zabini heir, Ron sincerely hoped that Blaise was actually sincere about his best friend and would admit his feelings for her soon enough.

At this point – at least from what Ron could see – their engagement harbored nothing more than a mutual attraction for one another and lacked any sort of formal confession from either of them. This was something that certainly did not comfort Ron in the least.

Well it's not like Lorraine and I are any better off...I don't even know how she feels about me. He thought in slight derision, making his way through the crowd of purebloods to follow the beautiful blonde in a gown of blue towards the balcony outside.

Once they got there, she immediately pulled him aside to a secluded portion of the balcony and turned to face him, a bright, beaming smile on her face.

"What's wrong, Raine? Your response to my letter said something about having a plan—"

Ron never finished his sentence when she rushed forward and pulled him in for a deep kiss, her arms going around his neck and pulling him against her. He blinked in shock for several moments, his eyes going wide in surprise before he melted and wrapped his arms around her waist, leaning down and meeting her ministrations easily with equal fervor.

Once she pulled away, Ron's face was flushed and his breathing was slightly labored but he smiled at her, his hand going up to stroke a strand of blonde hair away from her cheek.

"Wow...So does that mean you feel the same—"

“Ron...Do you love me?”

The smile on Ron's face flickered and he gaped at her, his eyes going wide and his face flushing even more in surprise at her question. Seeing him sputtering at her in a wordless trance, she sighed and pulled him deeper into the shadows, one of her hands going to cup his cheek.

“Ron! I asked...Do you love me?” She asked again, setting her face into a stoic expression that betrayed the nervous pounding of her heart. When Ron finally blinked and nodded wordlessly, she smiled and let out a sigh of relief, throwing her arms around him in an affectionate hug.

“O—Of course, I do...I I—love you! Otherwise, why else do you think I've been writing letters to you all this time – asking you to give me a chance? Why else do you think I've been acting like an idiot?!” He finally managed to say, blushing darker when she laughed and hugged him tighter, her pale cheeks tinged with a lovely shade of pink.

“Oh Ron, I...I think I love you too...I really do!” She managed to rush out, embarrassed at her own admission and laughing when Ron's face broke out into a wide, foolish grin. He let out a loud whoop and wrapped his arms around her, scooping her up from the ground and spinning her around.

She squealed in laughter and protested weakly against him, struggling until he relented and set her back on her feet. Once they had both calmed down, they broke away from another deep kiss and looked into each other's eyes, ignoring the bustle and lively chatter of the party behind them.

After a long moment of silence, Lorraine finally spoke up, directing Ron's attention to the slightly nervous, otherwise determined look in her blue eyes. “Ron...I have to know...Do you want to be with me? Are you willing to make this work somehow...?” She asked nervously, biting her lip and worriedly checking behind them as she waited for his response.

Without a second thought, he nodded and raised a hand cup her cheek in reassurance. "Of course, I do. What do you want me to do, Lorraine? I realize you'd still have to tell earn your family's approval about me—especially since you're still engaged to that bastard but if you'd just give me some time, I can jumpstart my career and hopefully your family can accept me—"

"I have a plan for us, Ron...A wild one...But I think it could work. I just..." She stopped and sighed, looking away for a brief moment before turning back and looking imploringly into his blue eyes. "I want you to trust me. I have a plan but it might be dangerous for you...So I need your support." She told him, wincing when she saw the uncertainty flicker in his eyes.

"What do you mean? What are you planning to do—"

"You see, Louis...? I told you she was harboring some attraction to the Weasley kid..."

Both she and Ron turned around in dismay to find Philippe Winchester stepping out onto the balcony with an angry sneer on his handsome face, his eyes flashing at the comprising position of the two figures before him. Behind him, the Winchesters followed along with Louis Malfoy, who was glaring accusingly at his daughter in open disapproval, the sneer on his face dripping with disdain.

"Lorraine, I'm ashamed of you...A Weasley...? Have you no self-respect?" He drawled in a low hiss, his face set into an angry scowl. Blushing in humiliation, Lorraine instantly tore herself away from Ron and folded her hands behind her back, her eyes dropping to the floor.

"Father, I can explain everything. I—"

She stopped and gulped nervously when the rest of her family – her mother, Lawrence, Narcissa, Lucius, Byron, Draco and even Anton stepped out onto the balcony in curiosity, their eyes widening in shock when they saw Ron and Lorraine's compromising situation.

"Shut the door!" Draco growled loudly at Byron before any of the guests could see them, causing the metamorphagus to roll his eyes

but oblige nonetheless, shutting the balcony door and soundproofing the area to prevent any gossip columnists from scooping the story.

“What is the meaning of this, Louis?! I thought we had already agreed to an arranged marriage between my son and your daughter this season! Why is she with this Weasley?! Do you take me for a fool?” Peter Winchester – Philippe’s father – demanded in outrage, his eyes turning to flash accusingly at the Malfoys.

Louis looked thoroughly embarrassed as he turned to the furious Winchesters. He was about to offer his sincerest apologies for the mix-up when Lorraine spoke up again, directing the determined glint in her eyes towards her father and her grandfather.

“Father...I’m sorry to inform you but I can’t marry Philippe anymore!” She declared, meeting Ron’s questioning gaze and giving his hand a reassuring squeeze to silence him. Her mother opened her mouth to say something but she shook her head furiously and gave the woman a quelling look.

“No, Mother! Let me finish first! I have something important to say!” She announced, the blood in her cheeks now rushing out and leaving her pale with fear and anxiety. Gulping and looking up to meet the questioning glare Anton was giving her, she managed a shaky, quirky smile and gestured to Ron beside her.

“I can’t marry Philippe anymore...Because I’m...Because I’m pregnant!”

Everyone fell into a long lapse of thoughtless silence.

“YOU’RE...WHAT?!”

The hand Ron was using to grip hers fell limply to his side and he stumbled backwards, looking up at her with a shocked, gaping face.

Lorraine blinked rapidly up at her father’s stunned, frozen face – waiting with bated breath for his reaction. Then – as though someone had suddenly set off a time bomb – everyone exploded all at once in

different, simultaneous reactions, causing Lorraine to bury her face in her hands.

Lucius and Lawrence reacted first – exploding in anger and spitting out long streams of curse words out loud while the Winchesters followed after them, gasping in shock and furiously screaming at Lucius in outrage.

Draco seemed to be sputtering in speechless indignation – one of his eyes bigger than the other and his face frozen comically in shock while Byron and Anton emulated his expression perfectly, their jaws opening and closing in wordless gasps that were aching to spill out.

Lizette had burst into tears and had buried her face into her hands to be comforted by Narcissa beside her, the other woman looking up and glaring poisonously at a pathetically whimpering Ron Weasley who was now backing away from the family in fear.

“Lorraine...I do hope you know what you’re doing! Your family looks ready to kill me—”

“U—Uhm...And in case you’re all wondering...Ron’s the father.” Lorraine rushed out hastily, interrupting Ron’s high-pitched squeak with a nervous laugh, ignoring his disbelieving choked-up whimper behind her.

“What?! B—But HOW did that happen?! I never touched you...that way!”

Turning around hastily to meet his panicked face, Lorraine gave the Gryffindor a pale look, her eyes wide with pleading urgency. “Don’t you remember?! We did it a few weeks ago! Right?!” The pleading look in her eyes was his undoing and shrugging helplessly, he nodded – regretting his decision about half-a-second later when he saw the look of pure murder in Draco’s eyes.

“I don’t believe this! I have never been more humiliated in my life! Mother, father! Let’s get out of here! Forget about this engagement! I want it broken off immediately before the press links it back to me!”

Philippe raged loudly, casting one last look of disgust at Lorraine and sneering at her in absolute scorn.

Just as he turned to leave, Louis hastily reached forward and clasped the young heir by his arm. "Come now, Philippe – let's not be hasty! Ehehe...I'm sure we can work something out—"

"Forget it, Louis! My son will not be father to a bastard child! Let's go, Philippe!" Peter Winchester shouted coldly, grabbing his son by the hand and leading him back into the ballroom but only after stopping to give Lucius one final derisive sneer.

"Don't think this will not be remembered, Lucius. Your family will be dishonored! And you can forget about that business deal, we're through! I have never been more insulted in my life!" He spat out, glaring at the other man in outrage. Lucius sneered calmly back at him – unable to say anything to his defense – his eyes darting to burn a hole right through Lorraine's cowering form.

The Malfoy head spoke one chilly sentence but it was enough to cause a strong pang of guilt to shoot right through the female half-veela's chest.

"You have dishonored us all, Lorraine...Most of all, yourself."

At this, the Malfoy elders all turned and followed hastily after the Winchesters in hopes to make amends, leaving Ron gulping and staring nervously into the angry faces of the remaining Malfoys – Draco, Byron and Anton – all three of which were glaring icily at him in growing fury.

Ron gulped audibly and took another step back, his hand going out to yank desperately at Lorraine's. "Raine...Are you really pregnant? Are sure this was a good idea? I don't particularly feel like dying today..." He whispered hastily, wiping a bead of sweat from his brow when the features of Draco's face visibly began to morph into that of his animagus form with deliberate slowness.



Lorraine smiled nervously at the three Malfoys and slapped Ron's frantically tugging hand away from her, laughing nervously as she pulled the Winchester engagement ring off her finger.

"Of course I'm not, you prick!" She hissed, her eyes riveting to Byron and wincing when she saw that the metamorphagus' teeth and nails were lengthening rapidly in length and sharpness. Behind him, Anton's face also began to transform into hostile form – his fine features twisting into a hideous beaked face.

"Weasley...Didn't I tell you to...stay away...from my family?!" Draco hissed viciously, his face now half-human, half-wolf as his teeth began to bare themselves in his anger – causing Ron to back away in alarm.

Taking a deep breath, Lorraine slowly reached up and brought Ron's face to meet hers again – giving him an apologetic and imploringly sheepish smile. "Don't you understand, Ronald? I said that to get out of the engagement! Now they'll have to accept us! They have no choice – they'll make us marry! But I suggest you run now before they start—"

"DIE WEASLEY DIE!"

Ron didn't need telling twice and screamed for his life as Draco finally fully morphed into his wolf animagus form and lunged at him with his teeth– followed closely by a fully transformed Anton and a monstrous looking Byron – all of which were aiming at his throat and crotch.

Just as Ron managed to duck their advances and scrambled for the door back to the party – the balcony entrance swung open and a slightly more sober Harry walked outside with two champagne glasses in her hand. Peering innocently into the scene with a bright smile, she opened her mouth to offer Ron one of the glasses.

"Ron, would you like a glass of—"

"OUT OF MY WAY, HARRY!"

Harry barely finished her sentence and blinked once as a pale Ron zoomed past her, nearly knocking the glasses out of her hand, followed closely by a vicious Siberian wolf, a fully transformed Veela and a metamorphagus with enlarged limbs and gleaming talons for fingers.

Clambering back inside the ballroom, Ron increased his pace and tore right across the dance floor – screaming all the way through and causing all the dancers he passed by to stop and whirl around to face the bizarre chase in stupefied astonishment.

“YAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAARGHHHHHHHHHHH!       GAAAAAANG  
WAAAAAY!”

Shrugging, a still smiling Harry turned to meet a horrified Lorraine’s cringing face and offered her the drink in her hand.

“Champagne?”

A/N: Just a side note, the song Jaimee sang in the middle of the chapter was Natural Woman– the version by Kelly Clarkson. I suggest you download it and listen to it while reading that part of the chapter, it makes the scene easier to imagine and laugh at. Hahaha.

I’m sorry if this chapter was hellish long but I couldn’t cut it into separate chapters this time since it would spoil the flow of the story I already have planned out. In any case, I hope you all enjoyed Harry’s little drunken seduction ploys and song number :giggles like a little girl: The idea just popped into my head when I heard the song play in the radio and I had to write it!

Next Chapter: Harry’s worst hangover EVER, Gossip tabloids, (Draco leaves for Italy), More Ron/Lorraine and Harry’s Auror Qualifying Exam

PLEASE REVIEW AND TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK! CHEERS!

## Chapter 29 – Fights and Futures

“Urrgghh...”

Draco leaned down and placed a kiss on the mane of tangled black hair buried underneath his blankets. As he stood back up to put on his business suit, he watched lazily as a pair of sleepy green eyes peered up at him in silent query.

“Draco...?”

Yawning, a half-naked, bedraggled Harry – clad only in one of Draco’s shirts – cringed in pain and forced herself up into a sitting position on the large bed. She regretted her decision about a moment later when she felt a throbbing ache practically splitting her head into two.

“Ugh. I feel like shit. My stomach’s churning all over...” She muttered out loud, muffling another yawn as she ran a hand lazily through her tangled black tresses. Pinching the bridge of her nose, she looked up with hazy eyes – unaware of the way the oversized nightshirt she wore shifted to the side and was now teasing Draco with a portion of her pale, slender shoulder.

Smirking, he abandoned his task of adjusting his necktie and walked back over to the bed, leaning down to give the sleepy Gryffindor a lingering kiss and affectionate nip on her neck. “Are you okay...? Would you like a glass of water or anything?” He asked in amusement, watching as she cringed again and fell back onto the pillows.

“Ugh...I don’t think I can handle taking in anything right now. What...happened last night...? She asked out loud in query, shooting back up into a sitting position and watching the Slytherin busy himself with fixing his hair.

Draco thought carefully about the best possible response he could give.

“Well...I, for one, had the most amazing sex with you last night. More than once actually—”

“I meant the engagement party, Malfoy.” She interrupted hastily, her cheeks burning red with embarrassment as she eyed the rather suggestive leer Draco sent over her body. Wanting to hide her face from him, she turned around and buried her face back into the pillows again, flopping down onto the bed on her stomach in a boneless heap.

She heard him chuckling as he sat down beside her and lifting up her shirt; he began trailing a fiery line of sensuous kisses down the skin of her back. Shivering under his ministrations, she bit back a moan and waited for him to answer.

Halfway between nipping at the nape of her neck and licking behind her ear, Draco managed a muttered response. “A lot happened, Harry...Are you sure you want me to recount everything for you? You don’t remember anything...?” At this, he paused and waited for her reaction – cocking an eyebrow when her cheeks colored once more.

“The only thing I remember is having a few drinks...And a little bit of what happened...much later...” She let her voice trail off at that, coughing and looking away from Draco’s smirking face.

“Which part...? The one on my bed, my desk or the bathtub? Or the one on my father’s office table?” He asked innocently, his smirk becoming suggestive once more as he called to the mind the much appreciated events that had happened the previous night thanks to Harry’s drunken exploits and ideas. Personally, he didn’t mind Potter being drunk. Not at all.

“.....”

“I was lying about father’s office table. Although it’s not a bad idea...”

“.....How was the engagement party?” Harry asked after another long moment of silence, blushing darker and hiding her face at the obvious amusement on the Slytherin’s face. Smirking, he leaned over and began sucking on her neck again.

“Wonderful. You were gorgeous.” Was all he said, his voice sounding strangely clipped that Harry turned around to give him a suspicious glare.

When he didn’t say anything, she spoke again. “I didn’t do anything humiliating did I? I didn’t...make any lame jokes or anything of the sort?” She asked, biting her lip as Draco fought to keep himself from laughing out loud at her question.

“Er...No, Harry. I guarantee that you didn’t make any lame jokes.” He assured her, choosing his words carefully. Harry was unconvinced and narrowed her eyes at the expression on his face, pulling away from him and crossing her arms over her chest.

“Draco...Tell me what happened.” She warned, her lips curling into a growl but the Slytherin was no longer listening as he pushed her back down onto the bed instead, his lips attaching themselves onto the curve of her shoulder.

She would have protested but soon his hands had dived under the blankets and were now snaking up into her shirt, caressing her skin with deliberate ease and slowness. Just as she was about to ask him again, his lips pressed against her own – muffling her words with a searing kiss – and one of his hands impatiently yanked her shirt up her leg, allowing him to caress the skin of her bare thigh.

“You are so goddamn sexy, you know that? It’s frustrating...I can never get enough of you. You’re like a drug.” He growled irritably within their intertwined lips, pressing his body against hers and allowing her to feel his rigid arousal pressing into her thigh.

“Draco, stop...I’m serious here! I want to know what hap—are you even listening?!”

When his hands became more insistent and were leading to rather intimate areas of her body, she began protesting more loudly and struggled against him by shoving at his shoulders. It was only then did she finally realize that as opposed to her half-naked state that morning, her fiancé was, surprisingly enough, fully dressed.

Pushing lightly at his chest, she raised an eyebrow at his choice of clothing and waited for him to stop sucking contentedly on her shoulder before asking. "Before anything else, why are you dressed already? Do you have any classes today...?" She asked in confusion, watching in annoyance as he ignored her and moved on to nip at the skin of her other shoulder.

"Draco?"

She felt her eye twitch when she now felt his lips moving down her neck once more and his hands snaking up to massage her breasts. He bit down hard on her neck to draw blood; kissing the red mark and leaning back to admire it with a smirk of self-satisfaction.

"MALFOY!"

In the middle of giving her another hickey, he uttered a single, ineloquent grunt in answer to her question, raising Harry's hackles even further as she finally exploded in impatience.

"Draco, did you hear me?! Stop the marks already! I have so many of your bloody hickeys, people have been asking me if I have a rash on my neck!" She growled, finally drawing his attention as he pulled back and managed a sheepish smirk.

With a rueful smile, he shook his head at her question. "I'm leaving for Italy today, remember? My father will be arriving soon to pick me up." He explained, noticing the slight disappointment in her green eyes at his answer.

Smiling at her expression, he leaned over and rewarded her with a kiss on her scar. "I'll be back on Saturday for the Quidditch match. In the meantime...good luck on your qualifying exam alright? Just...Remember what we talked about constant vigilance. You'll be fine, I promise." He assured her, watching her return his nod with a smile.

He leaned over and gave her another kiss – this time on the lips – causing her melt instantly and wrap her arms around his neck. Then,

after several moments of staring into each other's eyes, Harry finally coughed and broke her gaze away from him in hasty embarrassment.

Pushing him away from her again, she pretended to smirk at him and roll her eyes. "Yeah, yeah...What are you waiting for then? Go on, get out of here and leave me alone." She kidded, causing him to give her a wry smirk.

"This is my room, I think you should be the one getting out." He retorted easily as he stood back up and headed over to his walk-in closet. "Besides, I haven't even finished packing some things yet. I'll leave in about twenty minutes." He continued, his voice echoing from the closet's open door.

She was silent for several seconds, staring at the direction of his open closet in thought. Finally, blinking herself out of her surprise, she spoke up again – finally realizing that he had managed to successfully distract her from her earlier question.

"You didn't answer my question awhile ago, Draco...What happened last night...?" She asked cautiously, running a hand through her tangled hair as she sat back up and self-consciously readjusted Draco's shirt to fully cover her slender frame.

Draco was silent for several seconds before he answered, his voice sounding slightly hesitant yet heavily amused at the same time. "Well...I won't lie to you, Potter. You were...quite the entertainer last night." He drawled loudly, unaware that his fiancé now looked horrified and had collapsed back onto the bed with a loud, ungraceful curse.

"What did I do?! Oh gods, I've been told that I can get a bit off when I'm drunk but—"

"Well...I wouldn't exactly say off, Potter... I would go more along the lines of...wild." Draco teased with a laugh, causing Harry to groan again and bury her face under one of Draco's pillows.

She stayed in that position up until Draco walked back out of the closet in his full business attire – complete with his coat – and sighed,

watching her hitting her head on the pillow repeatedly in dismay. He raised an eyebrow before reluctantly walking to the drawer next to his bed.

Then – picking up the newspaper for that morning – he hesitated before laying it down next to her head and waiting for her reaction. When she finally propped herself back against the headrest and began to read it, her eyes eventually grew to comical proportions.

Jaimee Potter: From Hero to Heroine to Heiress

By Monica Hupplecook (Society and Gossip)

Certainly a rather interesting turn of events at one of the first engagement parties of the Hunting Season, ladies and gentlemen! As an invited guest reporter during the Malfoy-Potter engagement party just last night, I was personally witness to an astounding display of Miss Jaimee Potter's surprisingly talented and rather comical display of her singing voice when she sang for her beloved husband-to-be. Her fiancé – the ever dashing and handsome Malfoy heir – was never seen to have smiled as much as he had last night upon Jaimee's performance.

"You make me feel like a natural woman."

An interesting choice of a song indeed as who are we to forget the ironic twist of events and circumstances which have led this blossoming couple into easily becoming this season's most talked-about, most exciting, and certainly most promising courtship story of the decade? And of course – since every love story has its ending – this particular one will reach its climax on the 30th day of March. The day Jillian Aimee Potter, formerly Harry James Potter, marries Draco Lucius Malfoy.

I am certain all of the Wizarding World will eagerly be anticipating one of the most historical and certainly most romantic events of the century. Till then, let us all keep a close watch on our prime match couple this season, shall we? Happy Hunting!



"I SANG?! GOOD GOD, I BLOODY SANG?! WHY DIDN'T YOU STOP ME?!"

This time, the Slytherin laughed when he saw the look of absolute horror on her face. Struggling to control himself, he shrugged and managed to give her a wry smile. "Well not badly, I can assure you. In fact, you actually sang quite well, you should sing to me more often—"

He was interrupted by a pillow flying right at his face and he reached out a hand to catch in mid-air before it messed up his hair. "Did you know that you're raunchier when you're drunk? Your hands were practically all over me and during dinner, you had your hand down my pants—"

"Shut it Malfoy before I kick you where my hand was!" She growled threateningly at him, interrupting him again before he finished his teasing remark. Holding back another smirk, he watched as she read the rest of the articles in silence, her face red with utter embarrassment.

Draco winced again as she practically ripped the page, her face immediately flushing red with shock at the article that proceeded theirs. Right underneath the picture of Draco kissing her cheek last night as they entered the ballroom was a picture of Ron racing out of the room with Draco, Anton and Byron right behind him – angry snarls on all Malfoy sons' faces.

Underneath this picture was another loud, blaringly lurid title of the next article published:

Winchester-Malfoy Broken Engagement: Suspected Weasley Third Party!

"Winchester and Lorraine broke it off?! Why?! What happened?! And what does any of this have to do with Ron?!" Harry seemed to rush out all at once in disbelief, her eyes darting nervously to Draco to see him pinching the bridge of his nose in exhaustion.

Setting the newspaper back down, she didn't bother reading the rest of the article and turned to look at Draco instead, waiting pointedly for him to answer her questions. After an exasperated sigh, he finally spoke, turning to level her with a warning glare.

"Bloody bastard knocked Lorraine up somehow! Father was furious and the Winchesters broke off the engagement!" He told her through gritted teeth, watching as her eyes grew wider with disbelief.

"Lorraine's pregnant?! I don't understand! How could Ron get Lorraine pregnant when they hardly spent time together—"

"The Winchesters were furious! They swore off all remaining ties with our family and have pulled out all corporate contracts for the next ten years!" He continued angrily, whirling around and glaring her down with steely, gray eyes.

"Because of your stupid friend, I have to work harder for MMC and make sure we don't lose money because of the failed engagement! This is all Weasley's fault for corrupting my cousin! He's disgusting! When I see him, I'm going to slit his throat and—" He stopped when Harry finally spoke up again, the shocked expression on her face turning angry.

"Hey don't blame this all on Ron, Draco! How do you know it was his fault?! These kinds of things happen, maybe they care more for each other than you think." She tried to reason with him calmly, immediately flinching when his eyes blazed in anger again.

"What do you mean?! He's a Weasley! We have a Malfoy-Weasley child on the way, it's disgusting! My family does not want any form of affiliation with their middle-class, mediocre bloodline whatsoever and I'll make sure that—" Draco stopped again at the fury flashing in Harry's eyes, stepping backwards as she stood up from the bed and wrapped the blankets around herself.

"That is my best friend you are talking about, Draco. I know Ron and I know he really cares about Lorraine...Maybe you should consider leaving them alone and letting them be happy. She seems to be

happier with him, you realize. Maybe it's love." She told him pointedly, walking up to him until their faces were inches apart.

Draco's jaw clenched in impatience and he glared at her, a mocking sneer making its way onto his face. "Love?" He scoffed, rolling his eyes at her suggestion. "How can she love a Weasley? They're stupid, they're inelegant, they're reckless and wild and—"

"Oh yeah, Draco? Well you know what? I happened to spend a good deal of my childhood with the Weasleys and I consider myself bred the same way. Yet, here you are...Engaged to me. Ever think of that? Maybe they're in the same situation." Harry snapped back icily, her eyes narrowing at him in taunting challenge.

At this, Draco managed a harsh laugh and shook his head at the idea. "That's ridiculous! You can't expect me to just let this go and allow our families to merge like that right? Father would freak! Besides, Weasley and I were enemies for nearly seven years—"

"SO WERE WE!"

Growling, this time Draco's hand clenched into a tight fist and he exploded, rounding on her and gripping her tightly on her shoulders. "Why are you defending him so much?! Is there something about the two of you I should know about or maybe something you're hiding?!" He hissed angrily at her, his voice shaking with restrained fury.

She gave him a disbelieving sneer, shaking her head at his irrational jealousy. "Ugh...I won't even dignify that with a proper response, Malfoy. I can not believe you are actually jealous of Ron of all people. You have trust issues." She muttered in disgust, making to walk out of the room.

Just as she turned and was about to head to the bathroom, Draco grabbed her by the arm and spun her around roughly to face him, causing her to wince in pain at the bruising strength of his grip. Tilting her chin up to meet his piercing glare, she held back a wince and met his gaze steadily.

His eyes were narrowed and a sneer was on his face as he stared her down, hissing out his next words in an angry drawl. "You know what? This fight isn't even about Weasley, isn't it? Let's go back a little bit, Potter. Why don't I ask you something now?" He mocked sarcastically, his fingers tightening painfully around her arm.

"Ow! Malfoy, let me—"

"You got yourself drunk as a bloody skunk during our engagement party, Potter. Now my question is why...? What the bloody hell did you think you were doing?" He asked in another low growl, his eyes looking deep into hers with demanding force.

Forcing herself to meet his gaze, she took a deep, shaky breath before allowing herself to answer his question. "...I was scared, Draco..Alright?" She began, waiting at least for the anger in his eyes to subside a bit before continuing to speak.

When his anger didn't seem to be going down, she sighed and forced herself to continue anyway, her eyes dropping down to her shoes. "I was nervous about the date you set for our wedding...Plus, Byron told me about your family's tradition about children...It was all just a bit too much for me to take." She admitted slowly, looking back up and gauging his face.

If anything, her words only seemed to inflame Draco's anger even more and he reached his other hand up to grip her by her chin, roughly forcing her face back to look directly at him. "Just what are you trying to say, Potter? That you don't want to marry me?! Is that what you're trying to say?!" He hissed at her through gritted teeth, causing all the blood in her face to drain out.

"N—No, that's not what I meant! I just meant – It's too soon, Draco! It's too damn soon for me to get married! I don't want to get married after graduation, it's just...wrong!" She finally blurted out, slapping his hand away from her chin in indignation.

"What is your problem?! It's not like what I'm asking for is unreasonable! It's only natural to get married after graduation for a pureblood and to expect a child within 2-3 years! Surely, it's not

something that you're going to deprive me of?!" He asked in incredulous anger, his jaw dropping as he watched her shaking her head in response.

"I still have my own dreams to chase! I want to stabilize my life first! I'm not ready to have a child with you yet and hell, you didn't even tell me about it! I had to find out about it by myself! Just when exactly were you planning to tell me, Malfoy?!" She demanded angrily, wrenching her arm from his vice-like grip and stepping away from him.

"I didn't think I needed to! As I said, I figured it was only natural—"

"WELL IT'S NOT, DRACO! ALRIGHT?! IT'S NOT! I used to be a man before all this and I had my own dreams! My own life! How do you expect me to react to a demand from you to bear a child within 2 YEARS when I've barely been a woman for 1 YEAR?! GIVE ME SOME TIME TO ADJUST FIRST, DAMN IT!" She exploded, causing the Slytherin to blink at her sudden anger.

Draco sneered harshly at her and leaned back her to fold his arms arrogantly over his chest. "So allow me to clarify the matter thus far. You don't want to marry me right away because you don't want to get pregnant." He began, his eyes hardening when he was answered by her nod.

"Unfortunately for me... As the heir to my family, I have to follow tradition and marry by next year. Produce an heir within 2-3 years after that. It's expected of me. And unfortunately for you, Harry...YOU have to bear me that heir since you're the WOMAN in this relationship." He taunted with a mocking tone and smile, watching as her face darkened in angry realization.

"I know, Draco. You made sure of that when you turned me into one." Came the blunt, deadpan response and at the angry sneer she directed at him, Draco rolled his eyes to himself and turned around, stalking back to the closet.

"Are you still on about that incident, Potter...? Will you move on already?" He drawled snidely as he began casting a charm over his luggage and began to levitate them out of the closet one by one. She

watched him do this for several minutes and it wasn't until he had walked out of the closet again before she answered him.

"So the reason you turned me into a girl is so I could lie down, spread my legs and bear you as many children as possible! You and your stupid family traditions! Even Ron and Lorraine are suffering for it! Haven't you ever thought of setting your own rules for once, Draco?" She asked in frustration, stopping when he snapped his head to level her with another angry glare.

"Don't mock my family, Potter...Tradition is precisely what has kept us strong all these years. If you can't understand that, then maybe we should consider if this engagement is even worth pursuing further..." His voice trailed off warningly but Harry knew it was an empty threat by the look in his eyes.

Still, it didn't stop her from wanting to call his bluff and she waited until after a house-elf had entered the room to drag his luggage outside before walked right up to him and looked him directly in the eye. "You're right...We should. I just realized that I didn't know what I was getting into when I agreed to marry you." She mocked coldly, feeling a pang of guilt in her chest when the expression in his eyes dimmed sadly at her harsh words.

Then – as soon as it had appeared – the look in his eyes vanished and was immediately replaced by hard anger. Giving her one final sneer, he finally stepped back and watched as she self-consciously tugged the blankets wrapped around her tighter around her body.

"...Neither did I, Harry..."

Throwing her one last look of angry disgust along with a muttered farewell, Draco finally grabbed his wand from the nightstand and stalked out of the room, slamming the door violently behind him. Harry winced – both from her returned hangover headache and the loud sound that echoed in the cold silence.

As soon as she was alone, she fell back against the bed and buried her face into his pillow, blinking back the few tears she had been holding back from their argument. Sighing, she turned and looked up

at the ceiling, unconsciously wrapping her arms around herself in self-protection.

"I just want a life that's mine before I share yours, Draco...That's all."

"I absolutely will not allow you to marry a mudblood!"

Blaise sighed for the fifth time since the whole argument had started, inwardly rolling his eyes to himself as he continued to watch Giovann Zabini pace the length of the office at the Zabini Manor back and forth, his face growing angrier with each passing minute.

When Blaise opened his mouth to say something again, Giovann finally whirled around and rounded on him, slamming his hand down onto the table in anger. "I cannot believe you actually blew off Vittoria for that muggleborn debutante! She was distraught and heartbroken—"

"Yeah, I saw she was pretty distraught in the arms of Anton Malfoy. She looked heartbroken alright, it took her a full five minutes to get over me instead of the usual three." Blaise drawled sarcastically, causing Giovann to snarl at him in contempt.

"Silence! How dare you answer me in that mocking, condescending tone? I am still the head of this family and I demand that you cancel your engagement with Miss Granger as soon as possible!" He demanded, this time causing Blaise's eyes to flash angrily at his words.

"I will not! Hermione is the most perfect match for me and I am beginning to love her! I will not let that go all because of her muggleborn heritage! It's about time we refreshed our blood anyway! Any more pure blood and we may as well expect deformities soon!" He argued, unaware of the small pair of eyes that were peering from the door behind them.

"I'll take my chances with deformities rather than half-breeds, Blaise." Giovann sneered, his eyes flicking over to the slightly open door several feet away. "Isabella, what are you doing out there? Didn't I tell you to go upstairs and start your Piano lesson?!" He drawled calmly,

raising an eyebrow when Isabella colored and entered the room in embarrassment.

Biting her lip, she nodded at her Uncle's request and turned to give her older brother a weak hug of encouragement. Then, looking uncertainly at both men, she finally turned and timidly walked out of the office, closing the door gently behind her.

As soon as she was gone, Blaise sighed again and gave Giovanni a pointed glare but the older man was already sitting down onto his desk and taking out a stack of papers to sign. Undaunted, Blaise spoke anyway, directing the Zabini Head's attention back to him.

"It's been almost a year since she was kidnapped, Uncle...She still hasn't said a word! I'm beginning to get worried. What if she never speaks again? What's going to happen to her?" He demanded angrily, watching as Giovanni calmly looked back up at him and raised an eyebrow in query.

"Well what do you expect, Blaise? I have been hiring the best Wizarding healers and mediwitches in Europe, nothing has changed. I doubt anything will ever make that girl speak again let alone have a normal life." Giovanni answered coldly, shifting through his documents.

"I don't believe that! Maybe there's something that can jolt her enough or something—"

"Why don't you tell her you're marrying a mudblood? That might work." Giovanni interrupted snidely, causing Blaise to clench his teeth in anger and level him with a sneer.

"Please don't call Hermione a mudblood, Uncle. She's a very beautiful, intelligent and sophisticated girl. Isabella thought so too." Blaise responded calmly, watching as a similar sneer to his made its way onto Giovanni's Italian features.

"I couldn't care less, Blaise. Anyway, you may return to Hogwarts now. Use the fireplace in the living room to go back. I expect you to owl me immediately once you have broken off your engagement and reacquainted yourself with Vittoria—"



“Let me take her to Hogwarts.” Blaise suddenly interrupted, standing up and placing both his palms on Giovann’s desk. Blinking in shock, the older Zabini looked up at him in disbelief, his eyes growing wide with confusion.

“Excuse me? Vittoria—?”

“Isabella. Allow me to take her with me to Hogwarts for several weeks...I’ll take care of her there. Introduce her to some people, take her to Hogsmeade, spend some time with her. Please, Uncle...” He implored firmly, his eyes glinting with a fierce resolve that he never felt before.

He remembered the way Isabella’s eyes had lit up and the way she laughed in genuine sincerity with Hermione last night – along with the way she seemed to learn immediately how to trust the Gryffindor in a surprisingly short amount of time.

Since the incident, Isabella had never opened up to strangers again – most especially to many of the girls Blaise had used to date and had introduced to her. With Hermione’s honest aura, however, Isabella seemed naturally inclined to develop a fragile friendship with the easygoing Gryffindor.

Perhaps Hermione’s natural warmth and rare sincerity was exactly what she needed to learn to trust again. More importantly, perhaps Hermione is exactly who Blaise needed to trust that people weren’t as superficial, conniving and flaccidas he always thought they were.

We both could learn something from her. He thought in realization, watching as Giovann blinked and appeared to be considering his suggestion. Then, to his surprise, the older Zabini managed a small, rueful smile and nodded, raising an eyebrow at his nephew.

“Very well...You may take Isabella with you to Hogwarts for several weeks.” He conceded, nodding when Blaise held back a smile of relief and returned his nod briefly before moving to stand up. Just as he reached the door, however, Giovann spoke again – this time the

amused smirk on his face clearly more visible as he directed his full attention to the younger man.

“Depending on how things progress with Isabella, Blaise...I...Well, let’s just say I might be willing to reconsider your engagement to Miss Granger. Until then, let’s see how things develop...Alright?” He spoke lightly, ignoring how Blaise’s eyebrows had shot upwards in shock.

“You mean, if we help Isabella talk again, you’ll let me marry Hermione—”

“You are dismissed now.”

Holding back a genuine smile, Blaise exited the room immediately, his movements fueled with a sense of exhilaration as he bounded up the stairs to fetch his sister.

Walking slowly into the Great Hall later that morning, a pale-faced Harry Potter groaned loudly and squeezed the bridge of her nose in pain. Failing to notice that the entire hall had fallen into an eerie silence at her entrance, she slinked over to her usual seat in the Gryffindor table, sighing in relief when she noticed that most of her housemates hadn’t woken up yet.

Collapsing onto the bench, she let her head fall back onto the table with a loud ‘thunk’, cringing again when she felt her horrible hangover splitting the insides of her sinuses. Neville and Luna looked up at her with a sympathetic smile, shaking their heads at her expression.

“You alright there, Harry...?” Luna asked lightly, causing the Gryffindor to lift her head up briefly to give the Ravenclaw a forced smile. The minute she did, however, she winced again and massaged her temples, reaching over to take a long swig of water.

“Ugh...I have the worst headache this morning...Plus, Draco and I sort of had an argument before he left so I feel like shit.” She admitted, still completely oblivious to the fact that the other students around the Great Hall were whispering and giggling amongst themselves while pointing to Harry and to the newspapers in their prying hands.

Biting his lip, Neville wondered briefly whether he should point this out but quickly decided against it just as Luna spoke up again, her attention drawn to the many red marks on Jaimee's neck. "Harry...Your neck. Do you have a—"

"Rash? I think so, Luna." Came the black-haired-girl's sarcastic, deadpan response. Grunting in irritation, she distractedly adjusted her collar to hide her neck. Biting back a knowing grin, Neville held back the tease that was threatening to erupt from him and gave her a comforting smile instead.

"So what did you and Malfoy fight about? Didn't he like your wonderful singing last night?" He kidded, causing Luna to laugh and Jaimee to burn bright red in embarrassment. "Shut up, Neville." She muttered under her breath, causing the couple to grin at her blushing cheeks.

Another round of smothered laughter erupted from the Ravenclaw table beside them, causing all three teenagers to whirl around. Seated a couple of feet away from Harry were several Ravenclaw third year girls all giggling and peering at her with mocking smiles on their faces. On the table in front of them was a copy of the very same newspaper article she had been reading that morning.

Harry felt her cheeks flushing with embarrassment as she lifted her eyes to the other occupants of the Great Hall, feeling a sudden urge to race out of the room when she caught sight of all the smirking faces of the other students around the room. Numerous copies of Witch Weekly and the Daily Prophet – both of which contained the same article – were being passed around while more and more students began to point and stare at her, whispering to each other under their breaths.

Sighing to herself, the Gryffindor shrugged helplessly and began helping herself to some breakfast, muttering darkly to herself in helpless misery. "Eh...What can you do...? Once again, I'm the star of everybody's gossip session. What else is new?" She grumbled, causing Luna to give her a sympathetic pat on the shoulder.

“Well I thought you had a beautiful voice, Harry...You sang beautifully. Although next time, you may want to cut back on the liquor.” She told her with a distant smile, causing Harry to choke on her water and immediately wince afterwards when her headache returned at the sudden movement.

“Urgh... This sucks. I am never drinking liquor again.” She said out loud, setting down her fork of pancakes with another groan when her stomach recoiled at the intake of food. Looking up to meet Neville’s amused smile, she forced herself to give them a friendly smile.

“Anyway... Enough about my misery. How goes the two of you so far?” She wiggled her eyebrows up and down suggestively, causing Luna to blink at her in confusion and Neville to redden and level her with a warning glare.

“We’re doing quite well, Harry...In fact...Well...” Luna stopped and blushed as she held up her ring to Harry’s face, immediately causing the other girl’s eyes to widen when she saw the beautiful diamond ring that rested on Luna’s finger.

Neville blushed darker when Jaimee gave a loud whistle and laughed, peering down at the ring in amazement. “That is one beautiful diamond, Lovegood...I’ll bet Neville’s going to spoil you rotten once you’re married huh?” She teased, causing the couple to laugh when she winced at her headache again after she had spoken.

Handing her another glass of water, Neville shook his head and took Luna’s hand in his, giving the slender limb a kiss. “Well...It’s nothing like your engagement ring, Harry...But it was my grandmother’s. It’s been in my family for generations.” He told her, smiling when Luna blushed and squeezed his fingers in response.

At this, Jaimee made a face and looked down at her own engagement ring, her face scrunching up when she was met with the Malfoy insignia imprinted onto the silver band around her finger. “This? It’s more like a collar actually...It gives Draco another reason to pretend he owns me.” She grumbled moodily and at this, Neville sniggered while Luna gave her a consoling smile.

"You must have had some fight with Malfoy, then...What happened anyway? Are you two okay?" Luna asked in mild concern, watching as Harry's face contorted in irritation again when she was reminded of the blonde Slytherin.

"Forget about him...I don't want to think about him right now. Anyway, finish up the story then. What's up with the two of you? When's the big date?" She asked again, successfully diverting the couple's attention off Luna's question.

Neville grinned while Luna managed an embarrassed smile, both of them meeting each other's eyes before they answered her. "Actually..We talked about it and we've both decided that we're going to break tradition and not get married right away. We're going to give it about one year of an engagement before we actually get married." He explained, causing Harry's eyes to widen in surprise.

"Wow...That's great, Neville! So your grandmother agreed to that? Isn't your family one of those traditional pureblooded families or something?" She asked in confusion and Neville nodded ruefully, managing a dismissive laugh.

"I suppose we are...But we're not as high-strung as we once were. My grandmother agreed to wait one year...And Luna's father was all up for waiting too. So unfortunately, we won't be joining the throng of couples getting married after this season's over." He continued, failing to notice the way Harry's eyes had dimmed at the reminder of her own impending wedding date.

Managing another weak laugh, she nodded and returned Luna's glowing smile with a forced smile. "That's...great, guys...I'm happy for you. I really am...Most purebloods this season aren't willing to wait the way you both are." She said softly, biting her lip in deep thought.

Luna met Neville's eyes for a brief moment in awkward silence but before either of them could say anything, they were interrupted when a bedraggled Ron Weasley plopped himself down beside Harry and began helping himself to some breakfast, his eyes covered with a pair of sunglasses.

Her worries forgotten, Harry raised a single eyebrow at Ron's choice of eyewear for that morning. Evidently, Neville seemed to be thinking the same thing and he voiced out Harry's incredulity for her. "Er...Morning, Ron...Sunny inside, is it?" He kidded lightly, giving the other boy a questioning grin but Ron merely shrugged, oblivious to their staring.

Watching him wolfing down his food, Harry cleared her throat loudly before asking him again in a louder tone of voice. "Ron? Uhm...What's with the shades? Are you trying to go for a new look?" She teased, smirking at him when he looked back up and met her question with a glare.

Sticking his tongue out at her – to which she responded to with a disgusted scoff when she saw bits of his half-chewed food on it – he turned back to his plate of bacon and eggs. "You've been hanging around Malfoy too much. You're starting to smirk like him, it's scary." He retorted, purposely evading her question yet again.

Harry opened her mouth to spit out a similar sarcastic response when Luna tried this time, speaking up in her usual deadpan voice. "You look ridiculous, Ron...What's with the sunglasses? Do you mind taking them off?" She asked bluntly and at that, Ron finally looked up and met their smirks with a helpless smile of his own.

Shrugging, he tried to move away from them before they could ask him what had happened. "Oh come on, guys...I actually think I look good with shades! Right Harry? Harry?! Wait—" He cut himself off when Harry promptly reached forward and snatched the glasses right off his face, causing all three Gryffindors to blink in shock when they saw the nasty bruise forming on his left eye.

Easing away from them, Ron tried to grab the sunglasses back but Harry held it away from him, a look of sympathy on her face. "Things aren't going so well with the Malfoys huh?" She asked softly, sighing when Ron shook his head and carefully put his shades back on.

“Obviously not...Your bloody fiancé gave me this black eye last night, if you must know. I saw him leaving this morning. What an arse! He looked like he was in a pretty bad mood himself so—”

“Bloody bastard!”

Neville, Luna and Ron all blinked at the pure look of anger on Harry's face when she heard Ron's words. Unsure of how to respond, Ron raised an eyebrow but continued anyway, drawing Neville and Luna's attention away from Harry's seething red face.

“Anyway, I was about to aim a good punch at his sneering face myself to return the favor but that was when Lucius Malfoy arrived along with a hulking mess of bodyguards so I thought against it.” He began, carefully helping himself to about five pancakes before explaining further.

“Then Lucius went on about how Lorraine's parents want me to go to their office this afternoon to talk about what's happened. He told me to bring Mum and Dad with me too. Merlin, I don't know how I'm going to deal with all that.” He admitted, his face paling as he forced himself to swallow the food in his mouth.

Blinking at her best friend in disbelief, Harry studied his features carefully. After a moment, she spoke – her face pale in realization at the fact that so much change was actually happening in all their lives – all in the span of that year alone.

“Did you really get her pregnant, Ron...? Are you really going to be a...father?” She asked, her voice cracking at the idea of her childish, redheaded best friend – the same guy who still played with his food – having a child of his own.

Ron reddened at the dismay he heard in Harry's voice. He blinked and struggled for the right words to say, giving the black-haired girl a disarming smile. “Well...Th—That is...This was all Lorraine's idea! I had nothing to do with it—”

Neville winced in sympathy while Luna shook her head at him, interrupting his stuttered response. “That's what you get for getting a

pureblooded debutante pregnant, Ron. Next time, you should think about the consequences of your actions.” She told him and at her words, Ron’s face burned almost as red as his hair.

“It’s not my fault! I...I didn’t have a choice in the matter! I—I—She—” He stopped halfway through his stuttering when the Great Hall entrance doors opened again and Hermione rushed into the room with a stack of parchments in her arms, the expression on her face one of panic and exhaustion.

Watching the Head Girl racing to report to McGonagall, Neville shook his head before taking a bite of his French toast. “Poor Hermione...I heard she has extra Head Girl duties this week because Malfoy isn’t around. I hope she’ll be able to study well and prepare for the Ministry qualifying exams.” He wondered out loud, causing the others to look back at him and nod in agreement.

Taking another long sip of water to ease her headache, Harry finally spoke up again – directing her question to Neville. “Oh yeah, that’s right. I almost forgot! The Ministry officials are arriving this morning right? To brief the seventh years about the schedules and positions available...? Where do you reckon they’ll be holding the Auror exam, Neville?” She asked in genuine curiosity, causing the others to look up in mild interest.

Neville looked uncertain and shook his head, giving her an apologetic look. “I honestly don’t know, Harry. I suppose they’ll be explaining that to us in awhile. I’m really nervous though...I’m pretty confident about the theoretical exam but it’s the practical exam I’m afraid of.” He admitted and hearing his nervousness, Luna leaned over to give him a kiss on the cheek.

“You’ll do just fine, Neville. In fact, I promise that you’ll be one of the top placers in the exam. No offense, Harry.” She followed up hastily, causing Harry to laugh at her apology and shake her head. “None taken. He probably will...I haven’t had enough time to prepare for it myself.” She admitted nervously, causing Ron to roll his eyes beside her.



“Oh please...You always say that. You’ll do bloody great, Harry. You’re a born fighter; they’d be bloody crazy not to let you in.” He told her, spraying her with a good deal of pancake bits when he spoke into her face.

Cringing and wiping the food bits off her cheeks, she grunted in response. “Thank you, Ron. I appreciate the support. Are you ready for your exam? You’ll be taking the qualifying exam for the Department of Finance and Inter-Magical Investments right?” She asked, watching his cheeks flush in embarrassment at the question.

Nodding, he laughed sheepishly and took a long swig of his juice. “It sounds silly...But I have to pass that exam now more than ever. It’ll probably be the only way I’ll ever get Lorraine’s father to agree into letting her marry me.” He grumbled, shaking his head at himself.

Harry opened her mouth to console him yet again but before she managed to say anything, Hermione finally collapsed next to them and began tugging frantically on Harry’s arm, directing her attention to the entrance of the Great Hall.

“They’re here! Holy Merlin, they’re really here! I’m so nervous, I feel like I’m going to be sick!” She rushed out in a panicked hiss, pointing to the sudden entry of about twenty, distinguished, blacked-robed Ministry officials into the Great Hall. An atmosphere of nervous silence fell upon the seventh year students watching the scene.

The Ministry officials were followed by a jovially smiling – practically bouncing – Professor Dumbledore who was, at the moment, conversing very animatedly with a very handsome, black-haired and black-cloaked wizard in his mid-twenties. Unlike the other Ministry officials, his black robes were adorned with a higher ranking seal – obviously indicating his powerful position in the Ministry.

While Dumbledore was talking animatedly while him, the dark-haired wizard was simply smirking back and listening in calculating silence, his enigmatic blue eyes scouring the room quickly in trained observation before resting back lazily on Dumbledore’s cheerful smile.

“That’s Vincent Ashford...I can’t believe he’s actually recruiting from Hogwarts this year.” Hermione whispered to Harry in awe as they watched the stunningly handsome wizard nod briefly before assuming his seat next to Professor Snape on the Head Table. As he turned to talk to several of the other professors seated near him, Harry turned around and gave Hermione a confused look.

“Who’s Vincent Ashford—”

“Oh for Merlin’s sake, Harry! Don’t you read the real news these days instead of all those gossip tabloids?” She admonished, giving both Ron and Harry a glare for their confused shrugs and sheepish smiles. Sighing, she lowered her voice and began to speak in hushed tones.

“Vincent Ashford is the Head of the Unspeakables Department in the Ministry. There have been rumors flying around from the other schools that he has been dropping in randomly to scout out chosen potentials for possible recruitment into his department.” She explained carefully, unaware that Luna and Neville were also listening to their conversation.

“What exactly does the Unspeakables Department do in the Ministry anyway?” Harry asked in confusion and at this, both she and Ron were surprised when Hermione actually shrugged in response to their question and shook her head.

“No one really knows, do they? All I know is...Recruitment into becoming an Unspeakable is strictly by invitation. Supposedly, they’re one of the most elite departments of the Ministry. I hear you have to undergo years of rigorous training or something like that...” She told them, her eyes wide as she surveyed Vincent’s appearance.

“Although he is extremely handsome, isn’t he?” She added in slight amusement, giggling when she saw the look of exasperation on Ron and Harry’s faces. “He’s eight years older than you, Hermione...Plus, I heard he’s gay and he’s dating someone.” Neville suddenly spoke up, causing the Gryffindor trio to jump in surprise when they finally remembered his presence.

Smiling mysteriously, Luna beckoned for them to lean closer to her, her eyes going back to watch Ashford from across the room. "I've actually heard a lot of conspiracy stories about the Unspeakables Department from my father." She began, the excited tone of her voice drawing in the others' curiosity.

At their eager nods, she continued. "He says they're some kind of undercover force or something...They recruit about one or two graduating students from each school and they send them away for about two years to some unknown location to supposedly train or something...After that, they select only three from those students to enter the department." She explained, watching as Ron, Hermione and Harry's eyes grew wide with suspense.

"Those that get chosen after their training or whatever... Well, they're said to be bloody brilliant! Completely untouchable!" Neville added, much to Hermione's dismay. Fortunately, Ron soon voiced her question out for her.

"What happens to the others? The ones who aren't chosen?" Ron asked, cringing slightly when Luna answered him with an eerie smile.

"Well...Strangely enough, the ones who don't get chosen can't seem to remember where they had been or what they had learned. It's all hush-hush, really. You guys should read the article my father wrote about them, it's really interesting." She told them, oblivious to the fact that Harry sent Ron a look which clearly spoke of their decision against Luna's suggestion.

Neville glared warningly at them but Luna continued on, her eyes glowing with wonderment. "It has all his speculations and theories about the mystery of the Unspeakables Department. His insights are actually quite moving...He believes their department has something to do with the upcoming invasion of the green people from Pluto. Father says the Unspeakables are probably preparing their safe arrival on Earth to pursue extra-terrestrial relations." Luna continued further, oblivious to the way Hermione was holding in a round of disbelieving laughter.

Meeting Harry's eyes across the table, both girls bit their lips to hide their smiles and hastily looked down when Luna looked up to check their reactions. Ron was stuffing his mouth with as much pancakes as possible to prevent the need to respond and Neville was glaring at all three of his housemates, the threat in his eyes clearly visible.

Shrugging, Luna suddenly smiled again and calmly resumed eating her breakfast, unaware of the immense relief on everyone else's faces as they too returned to eating their meals. After a long moment of uncomfortable silence, Hermione spoke up – a beaming smile on her face.

"Oh Harry...Don't you notice anything different about me...?" She asked innocently in a cheery voice, smiling widely at the look of confusion on the other girl's face. Inspecting her features carefully, Harry raised an eyebrow and gave a half-hearted shrug.

"You...Got a haircut?" She guessed lamely, flinching when Hermione's eyes flashed at her in annoyance. Pointedly deciding to give the clueless girl another try, she waited for her to guess again before she said anything.

Ron rolled his eyes at Harry's ignorance, helping himself to some more scrambled eggs and bacon. "It isn't that hard to guess, Harry. Just look at the glow on her face and you'll figure it out." He told her, scoffing derisively when Hermione laughed cheerfully in response to his quip.

Again, Harry raised an eyebrow and took a long sip of water to ease her headache. Then, pinching the bridge of her nose, she took another guess. "You...Had great sex last night?" She asked bluntly, chuckling when Hermione screeched in embarrassment and Ron began choking on his drink in hysterical laughter.

"Ugh! NO! Harry!Blaise proposed! I'M ENGAGED! Look!" Hermione finally exclaimed, raising her hand up and showing Harry the large diamond ring sitting comfortably on her ring finger. When Harry couldn't seem to say anything in her shock, the brunette smiled and turned to Neville and Luna's ecstatic faces.

“Congratulations, Hermione!”

“Wow! That is great news!”

“YOU’RE GOING TO GET MARRIED?!” Harry exclaimed, turning to give Hermione a wide-eyed look of shock and disbelief. Turning to Ron – who was currently busy with loading more bacon onto his plate – she exploded again. “AND YOU’RE GOING TO BE A FATHER?!” At her loud shout into his ear, Ron nearly choked on his food and turned meet her shocked face with his own.

“Geez, Harry...Don’t act too happy for me. And you’re engaged too you know! In case you’ve forgotten!” Hermione pointed out irritably, slinking back down onto her seat in disappointment over the other girl’s reaction.

Seeing the scowl on Hermione’s face, Harry finally sighed and relented, forcing an encouraging smile onto her face for the other girl. “I’m sorry, Hermione. I’m happy for you, I am. I guess I’m just a little surprised that’s all... We’re all growing up all of a sudden, it’s just...Such a big change. Everything’s happening so fast.” She admitted, causing all the others to give her a comforting smile.

“Well we are graduating this year, Harry...It’s only a matter of time before—”

“Good morning, my dear students! I trust you’ve all had a pleasant night’s rest?” Dumbledore’s voice suddenly boomed throughout the entire Hall, breaking through Ron’s voice as everyone turned around to face their white-haired Headmaster.

Giving Ron a grin for his efforts, Harry and the others turned to listen to Dumbledore’s introduction of their guests that morning, oblivious to the fact that just several meters across from them – Kingsley was now having a serious discussion with a very curious Vincent Ashford.

“In particular, I hope the seventh years have gotten a good night’s sleep.” Dumbledore continued with a smile, causing several groans and nervous laughter to break out. “This morning, we are fortunate enough to have with us several of the Ministry’s officials as our

guests. They will be administering the different qualifying exams for the different departments all throughout the week for all those interested.” He continued, meeting all the student’s curious faces with an encouraging grin.

“Now...I shall turn the floor over to Mr. Percy Weasley to explain the procedures of the examinations. Good luck and have a pleasant morning, dear students!” Dumbledore concluded cheerfully as he sat back down and Percy Weasley stood up, greeting their whispers with a stern glare.

“All examinees for the following departments will be taking their exams tomorrow morning: Department of Underage Wizardry and Misuse of Magic, Department of International Cooperation, Department of Inter-Magical Cooperation...” Percy droned on for several minutes but Jaimee was no longer listening.

Her attention had shifted and she was now staring intently at Professor Sleewick – who was now locked in a rather heated discussion with Vincent Ashford. Both men seemed to be talking in hushed tones but Harry felt her suspicion rise when Ashford looked up glanced directly in her direction, an unreadable smirk on his handsome face.

Blushing under the attractive man’s stare, Jaimee instantly snapped her gaze back to Percy just as he was reading off the list of examinations for the afternoon. “And for tomorrow afternoon, the following examinations shall commence: Department of Ancient Languages, Department of Ancient Artifacts Archaeology and Preservation (AAP), Department of Central Intelligence and Strategic Operations (CISO)—”

“That’s mine!” Hermione hissed excitedly to them, her face flushing with anticipation. Harry and Ron grinned at her reaction but they both instantly turned back to Percy’s discussion, waiting for him to read off the respective department they were waiting for.

“—Department of Auror Protection and Defense.” He finished, pausing to flip the page of the documents he was reading from. As he did this, Ron groaned and turned to look at Harry in annoyance.

“Ugh...I guess you both will be taking your exams earlier than me. Damn, I thought I would get it over and done with.” He complained, earning a sympathetic pat from both girls.

At the Head Table, Percy continued, his voice growing even more monotonous with each passing moment. “For Wednesday Morning: Department of Muggle Protection, Department of Finance and Inter-Magical Investments—”

“Finally!” Ron exclaimed in relief, his hand already reaching towards one of the slips of papers several Ministry officials were passing around the different tables regarding the different departments being mentioned and their examination areas.

Grabbing one for herself and checking to see her own examination schedule – 2:00 pm in the Quidditch Field – Harry felt another strange, prickling feeling at the back of her neck. She was just about to turn around when Neville suddenly spoke up, drawing her attention to his nervous face.

“Hmm...So I guess we’re tomorrow huh, Harry? Gods, I’m so nervous. I hope we both do well.” He sighed, meeting Harry’s supportive smile with a grim one of his own. “You’ll do fine, Neville. We all will.” Luna assured him as she read up on the AAAP Department and she was met with Hermione’s nod, both girls already scanning through the lists in excitement.

“Ugh...Mine is in the Transfigurations Classroom...Suddenly, I’m feeling a lot more nervous.” Ron muttered beside them, his face turning a sickly pale shade. Laughing, Harry clapped him lightly on the shoulder. “Relax! You’ll ace this, Ron...I’m sure you can—”

She stopped midsentence in horror when she looked back at her slip of paper and saw the small, finely written words that were magically being written onto the bottom corner.

When you see this message, please do not react and do not tell your friends.

Paling and looking back up at her friends – she made sure they were all laughing and joking amongst themselves again before peering back down and reading the written message in silence. The previous one had been erased and in its place was another short sentence, signed with a name at the very end.

Allow me to meet you in Dumbledore's Office after breakfast. Kingsley shall be present as well. Signed – Vincent Ashford, Department of Unspeakables.

Gulping, Harry peered carefully at her friends again before she slowly lifted her gaze back to the Head Table, paling even further in nervousness when she saw Ashford's piercing blue eyes leveling her in calculating silence, a cold smile on his face.

Beside him, Kingsley was also looking at her with an encouraging smile and nod. Taking this as a positive sign, Harry nodded back to both men in agreement before returning to her breakfast in awkward silence, her friends oblivious to the sudden nervous look on her face.

"I can not believe you, Ronald! You got that poor girl pregnant?! I've taught you better than that!" Molly Weasley bawled to her husband as she, Arthur and Ron headed over to their fireplace to floo themselves over to Louis Malfoy's office that afternoon.

"Mum...In case you haven't noticed, Lorraine Malfoy is hardly someone I would call a poor girl." He replied sarcastically, rolling his eyes when his father gave him a disapproving glare at his tone of voice. Sighing, he held his tongue and threw a pinch of powder in the fireplace, shouting out the name of the manor and immediately finding himself in one of the Malfoys' large, luxury estates in France a couple of seconds after.

Standing in front of him in a beautiful lavender dress and with a cringe on her beautiful features was a nervous, certainly un-pregnant Lorraine Malfoy. Seeing him glaring at her, she offered him a helpless smile. "Hey Ron...U—Uhm...A—Are your parents coming?" She asked him uncertainly, looking around for the two older redheads.



Ron glowered at her but answered, seizing the blonde by her arm and pulling her closer to whisper into her ear. "Yes! I certainly hope you know what you're doing, Lorraine! This little lie of yours is doing more damage than I expected! What happens after nine months when they all look at you and see that you're not pregnant?!" He hissed at her, causing her to wince again.

"I'm kind of hoping it won't come to that. Look, all we have to focus on now is getting my family to accept the circumstances of this so – Hello Mr. and Mrs. Weasley!" She interrupted herself hastily as soon as Arthur and Molly Weasley appeared behind Ron in the large, marble fireplace.

As soon as she had seen Lorraine, Mrs. Weasley rushed forward and pulled the girl into a warm embrace, sobbing tearfully against her. "Oh darling, I am so sorry for what my stupid son has done to you! Rest assured, he will own up to his responsibilities, I promise you!" She cried, sniffing loudly and oblivious to the way Lorraine was shooting Ron a panicked look over her shoulder.

Mr. Weasley, on the other hand, was surveying the elegant living room in awe, his blue eyes taking in the exquisite furniture and diamond chandeliers. "Merlin's beard! This is some place you've got here, Lorraine! I could fit my entire house in this room!" He commented with a smile, looking back just in time to see Ron shooting Lorraine another pointed look.

Cowering under the Gryffindor's glare, she nodded hastily and carefully extracted herself from Molly's tearful embrace, giving both Mrs. Weasley and her husband a nervous smile. "I—If you'll excuse me, Mrs. Weasley...I believe my father and mother are awaiting your arrival in my father's study. Shall I take you there?" She offered gently, purposely avoiding Ron's eyes.

Taking both older Weasleys by their arms, she offered them a warm smile and led them down a maze of hallways – all the while ignoring Ron's pokes and hissed questions to her every five seconds. Once they reached the end of a particularly large corridor, she opened the huge double doors and ushered them into the vast office – leading them to their seats across her father's desk.

Neither Louis Malfoy nor his beautiful veela wife beside him looked happy to see either of the two Weasleys before them at their entrance. They remained silent, peering at the other parents with cold, unwelcoming sneers on their faces.

Beside them, Anton was leaning against his father's desk with his arms crossed over his chest. Seeing Ron enter the room and sit down next to his parents, his face transformed into his hostile form again in dislike and Ron answered him by sneering in disgust.

"Bloody ugly bird-face." He muttered under his breath, causing Anton's eyes to flash in anger.

"What did you call me—"

"Arthur and Molly Weasley. It seems we have important matters to discuss." Louis interrupted coldly, breaking through Anton's growled threat as all three Malfoys finally turned and addressed the other family before them.

"It would appear so, Malfoy." Arthur answered easily, his hands fidgeting nervously with his fingers on his lap. Molly reached over and patted him consolingly on the back before blowing her nose loudly on her handkerchief, causing Lizette to sneer at her in disgust.

Lorraine took the seat beside Ron nervously, her eyes darting back and forth between her parents and her brother. Unconsciously, she reached out and placed her hand over Ron's to seek for comfort, to which the redhead sighed and responded to by squeezing her fingers.

Louis saw this little exchange and sneered derisively, directing his glare back to Arthur's cringing face. "Your son has gotten my daughter...my engaged daughter...pregnant. Now...What do you propose we do about this, Weasley?!" He mocked callously, drawling out their last name as though it was a common curse word.

Arthur immediately spoke up, directing his attention to Lorraine in apology. "We understand the implications of this mess, Malfoy. That is why we are fully amenable to a marriage between my son and your

daughter to fix the mess and tie the ends. Certainly, we both do not want Lorraine to raise this child without the father—”

“Marriage? You expect my daughter to marry your son? Do you not understand the weight that would have on my entire family?” Louis mocked callously, directing his sneer to Ron and blinking in shock when Ron met it easily with his own.

“I am prepared to make things right...sir.” Ron answered coldly, spitting out ‘sir’ as though it had pained him to do so. “I intend to work hard after I graduate and eventually start up a business of my own. I guarantee you that I can take good care of your daughter.” He told them, trying not to blush when he saw the loving smile Lorraine gave him at his words.

While Lizette also seemed to smile reluctantly at the honesty she heard in Ron’s words, both Louis and Anton scoffed in disbelief and rounded on the Gryffindor in outrage. “Good care of her?! Philippe Winchester would have taken good care of her! Yet you broke up their engagement and set off this scandal in my family!” Louis exploded, slamming his fist down onto the table.

At this, Ron’s face twisted into a snarl and he stood up, glaring at the older Malfoy in anger. “Philippe Winchester was nothing but a scoundrel, a libertine and a bastard who would have broken your daughter’s heart and ruined her life! All I am asking for is a chance to prove myself! I guarantee that I will make your daughter happy and that I can be the best man for her!” He raged, meeting both men’s glares head-on.

While Arthur was smiling at his son’s fierce spirit, Molly was shocked at hearing so much passion and determination radiating from her youngest son’s voice. Lizette Malfoy was smiling openly now and she placed a hand on her husband’s arm, gently prodding him to calm down.

Anton walked right up to Ron and grabbed him by the front of his collar, his handsome face flaring up once again into his veela form in threat. “Don’t make promises you can’t keep, Weasley! My sister deserves nothing but the best. Can you give her that?! What can you

give her that Philippe Winchester can't?" He challenged furiously, raising a clawed hand up to Ron's face.

"Anton, stop it! Let him go!" Lorraine protested angrily, standing up from her seat and trying to pull him off the Gryffindor but her brother was stronger than she was and brushed her aside, turning his full attention back to Ron.

To his surprise, Ron wasn't cowering away in fear. Instead, he met Anton's sneering face with a determined glint in his eyes, unafraid of the way his claws were nearing his eyes. In silence, he looked carefully over at his parents then at Lorraine before answering.

"Myself."

Suddenly confused, Anton released his grip on Ron's collar and took a step back, his face slowly setting itself back into human form. Behind him, Louis and Lizette were also staring at Ron in confusion, their eyebrows raised in question at his rather odd answer.

Biting back his nervousness, Ron walked right up to Lorraine's father and placed his hands on his desk, looking up at the older man with a fierce look in his blue eyes.

"Something that Philippe Winchester can never give her...I can give her myself, Mr. Malfoy. All that I am. I can give her love and laughter and happiness. I promise that I will work hard to earn your approval...And I will support Lorraine with all my strength. She will have the best...I assure you. Because I intend to give her nothing less." He enunciated loudly, turning around and meeting Lorraine's tearful eyes with a tender smile.

Ignoring his mother's increased sobbing at her son's words, Ron strode across the room and took Lorraine's hand in his, raising it to his lips and giving it a kiss. Desperate to hide her tears, Lorraine choked back a sob and collapsed against his chest, wrapping her arms around him for support.

At the tender scene, Arthur looked back up and met Louis' eyes, watching as the other man sighed in defeat and sank back down to

his chair to bury his face in his hands. Lizette finally spoke up for the first time since their meeting, directing her voice to Molly Weasley.

“You ‘ave...A very romantic boy zhere, Mrs. Weasley...I am French...I love romance.” She commented lightly in a thick, French accent, her eyes warm with amusement as she looked back and noted the look on her daughter’s face.

Molly blew her nose loudly on her handkerchief again – causing Lizette to cringe once more in disgust – before she answered. “Yes...He is...And I can assure you that he means every word. I have never raised a son who’s a liar.” She assured her, causing Lizette to chuckle in response.

Anton looked just as speechless as his father and bent down to whisper something to Louis, both men looking carefully at each other before sighing and turning back to meet Ron’s nervous, expectant face. Before either Anton or Louis could speak, Lorraine spoke up for them, pulling away from Ron and leveling her entire family with an angry resolute look they had never seen on her face before.

“Father...Mother...Anton...I don’t care what the family says. I will marry Ron Weasley and we are having this child together.” She told them firmly, choosing to ignore the way Ron had choked behind her upon hearing the word ‘child’.

“...And neither of you can make me change my mind. I love him and I want to be with him. I would rather die than marry that bastard Winchester—”

“Watch your language, young lady!” Lizette scolded her daughter angrily, causing the younger Malfoy female to redden in embarrassment but otherwise continue.

“So please, father...Don’t make this any harder than it has to be. I realize that Ron isn’t like Philippe but that’s precisely why I like him! And besides, I can’t raise this child on my own, it needs a father—”

Ron began choking behind her again but she nudged him sharply in the ribs and continued.

“—so please let me do this. I don’t care if the family disapproves or if you have to disown me or even if grandfather makes me kneel on pebbles for an entire week! I—”

“You have two weeks, Weasley.”

Blinking in shock at her father’s interrupting statement, Lorraine met Ron’s confused look for a moment before she turned to look back at Louis’ and Anton’s smirking faces. Her mother simply smiled and nodded, rewarding Ron with a fond smile.

“Wh—What?”

Highly amused at his daughter’s uncharacteristic ineloquence, Louis smirked again and began pulling out several sheets of parchment from his desk, gesturing for Arthur to come closer to inspect them. “He has two weeks, Lorraine.” He repeated, pulling out more documents and handing them to Mr. Weasley.

“Two weeks to prove himself worthy to marry a Malfoy daughter...By the end of two weeks, I expect him to have a career and a future. I want him to prove the words he just told you and to show me that he’s not just another opportunist lying to make you believe him.” He explained, much to Ron’s indignation.

“Excuse me, Mr. Malfoy but I meant every single thing I said! I intend to—”

“I agree with Mr. Malfoy, Ronald. It is about time you assumed more responsibility with your life.” Arthur suddenly spoke up as he and Louis began drafting the legal documents to formalize their courtship, much to Ron’s horror when he saw his mother pointedly nodding and agreeing with them.

“What?! You too, Mum?! Surely you don’t—”

“In the duration of those two weeks...I will have Draco check up on you from time to time once he returns from Italy. Should he report to me that you’re slacking off or that you’re not treating my daughter well,

I will cancel this courtship immediately.” Louis continued further, this time causing Ron to redden in anger.

“But Draco hates me! He’ll just lie to you and make me look bad all the time! You can’t be serious!” He protested, causing Anton to laugh in mockery at the look of pure dismay on the redhead’s face.

“That makes two of us then, Weasley.” He chimed in snidely under his breath but Ron didn’t hear him, his attention focused solely on both Louis and his father.

Louis merely blinked at him, raising an eyebrow at Ron’s words. “Well then you’re just going to have to change his mind too about you then, aren’t you?” He drawled with a sneer, holding up a hand to silence him when Ron seemed incline to argue again.

Sighing, Lizette walked over to him and gave him a consoling smile, reaching over to pat him on the shoulder. “There, there...We are only making sure you will take care of our daughter as you ‘ave said you would. You...did say you would do anything in your power for ‘er, correct?” She pointed out, pointing over his shoulder and directing his attention back to Lorraine behind him.

Despite the blush on her face, Lorraine looked up at him and offered him a beautiful smile, her blue eyes warm with love and relief. Seeing the look of pure happiness on her face, Ron simply couldn’t bring himself to say no.

Hanging his head in defeat, Ron finally nodded in agreement and turned back to look at his parents just in time to see them finalizing the documents and signing their names on the parchment. Walking up behind him, Lorraine took her hand in his again and gave it a comforting squeeze, blushing when his fingers instantly intertwined themselves with hers.

Finally looking away from their parents and managing a helpless smile, he turned around and gave her a reassuring kiss on her cheek, leaning back to admire the beautiful blush on her cheeks. Instead of saying anything in response to the question in her eyes as to whether

he was okay with the arrangement, he decided to answer her the best way he knew how.

“I love you, Raine.”

“Take a seat, Jaimee.” Dumbledore greeted cheerfully as she entered the privacy of his office, her eyes immediately darting around the room. Leaning lazily against Dumbledore’s table, Ashford studied her with another unreadable smile, his eyes carefully guarded and mysterious.

Beside him, Kingsley greeted Harry with a nod and gestured for her to sit down as well but she instantly shook her head, her eyes narrowing at him in question. “If you don’t mind, I’d rather stand.” She replied coldly, her suspicious glare flicking from him to Ashford’s smirk.

He seemed to find her uneasiness amusing and her suspicions were confirmed when the man chuckled, lazily pushing back the dark bangs of black hair that covered his blue eyes before pointedly taking the seat next to hers.

With that, he offered her a mocking smile and gestured to the seat again, indicating for her to sit down. Kingsley rolled his eyes at the younger man’s open arrogance and sat down beside him, waiting for Harry to relax and sit down as well.

When she finally did – her eyes still narrowed and her muscles tense – Ashford threw her a heartbreaking smile that didn’t reach his eyes and crossed his arms over his chest. “Harry James Potter...We meet at last. Defeater of Lord Voldemort. Savior of the Wizarding World. International and Inter-Magical Champion Combatant, 3 Year International Dueling Champion—”

“Yes, I know all that, sir but I highly doubt you’re here to rattle off my accomplishments to me. What is it I am called for?” She interrupted bluntly, causing Ashford to chuckle again when Kingsley cleared his throat and answered for him.



“Potter, as you may already know, this is Vincent Ashford – the pompous arse who heads the Unspeakables Department at the Ministry of Magic.” He began slowly, much to Ashford’s heavy amusement when he reacted with a sarcastic drawl.

“Aw, Kingsley...I’m hurt. I realize I can be an arse but that’s not a proper introduction—”

“You may have heard of the department one way or another...” Kingsley continued as though he hadn’t heard him, watching uncertainty flicker in Harry’s eyes. Ashford smirked at the other man but let his own gaze fall back on Harry, watching her reaction carefully.

Nodding, she considered the right answer to his question. “Yes...I have heard of the department, Kingsley...Mr. Ashford.... Though I’m not entirely sure of what they do...” She replied evenly, her eyes moving to Dumbledore in question.

Dumbledore smiled at her and began to explain further. “You see, Harry...Every couple of years, the Head of the Unspeakables Department visits various schools and recruits selected potentials from each one. I am sure you have heard this somewhere?” He asked again, waiting until Harry nodded her agreement.

“Well...This year...The teachers and I have selected two potentials to recommend to their department. Now, unfortunately – the other potential has already expressed his disinterest in applying for the position—”

“Lucius Malfoy’s son.” Ashford cut in with a smirk, much to Harry’s shock as she whipped around and stared at the dark-haired man in surprise.

“Draco—?”

“Yes...Malfoy was the other potential. He declined, seeing as he was already most eager to be the successor to his family’s multinational company. Your interest in applying, on the other hand, I have yet to

know.” Ashford continued, calmly gauging the reaction on Jaimee’s pale face.

“Y—You mean, I’m the other potential?!”

Kingsley scoffed while Dumbledore chuckled at her disbelief, shaking his head at her reaction. “The top recommendation, actually. Why do you sound so surprised, Harry? Your magical capacity has always exceeded anyone else’s – as discovered clearly by many young bachelors this season, unfortunately.” He added, causing Kingsley to snort again while Ashford blinked lazily in response.

“B—But, I—I already have plans of joining the Auror Department! I’ve dreamed of becoming an Auror since fourth year! You know that Kingsley! My examination is tomorrow afternoon; I don’t think I’ll be willing to—”

“Miss Potter.” Ashford interrupted, straightening in his seat and leaning closer towards her. Harry stiffened at his closeness and pulled back nervously, blushing under his intense blue eyes. “Do you know what an Unspeakable is? Or what they do?” He asked her in a low voice, smirking when he heard her gulping loudly before frantically shaking her head.

Signaling the other two men in the room to keep quiet, he leaned back against his seat and began to explain. “I’ll make this simple enough for you – Undercover Elite Aurors, Potter. The selected best of the best.” He told her, causing her green eyes to widen at his whispered words.

“Undercover...Aurors? You mean...Like spies or something?” She asked in confusion, unaware of the way Kingsley was rolling his eyes and Dumbledore was listening to the discussion with a cheery smile on his face.

Ashford smirked at her analogy but nodded all the same. “I suppose you could say that...They receive the best training, the best equipment...Their skills are above the capacities and abilities of plain Aurors, Potter. They are dispatched all over the world. Their dangerous missions require expertise and risks well beyond the

bounds of the missions undertaken by the Auror department.” He explained further, smirking when he noticed the definite interest growing in Harry’s eyes.

“They’re like a more advanced group of Aurors, Harry. They’re one level above the Auror Department and handle the more extreme cases. Their main difference is that they’re never seen. Some of their missions are so dangerous that they move anonymously without the Wizarding World ever knowing.” Kingsley added, causing Ashford to scoff in derision.

“We’re not just advanced Aurors, Kingsley. We’re in a league of our own.” He said smugly, causing Kingsley to glare at him in dislike and Dumbledore to chuckle in amusement.

“So you mean...If I join the Unspeakables Department...I’ll be working anonymously? No reporters...No gossip...No stupid people gawking at me all the time?” She asked hesitantly, causing Dumbledore to give her a comforting smile.

“Yes, Harry...But in exchange...You have to know one thing. Being an Unspeakable demands so much more time and energy than being an Auror. The missions will be more dangerous, more time consuming...The hours will be more hectic and tiresome. Remember...You are an engaged woman.” Dumbledore reminded her gently, causing the light in her eyes to dim in realization.

“But surely I can handle it given the right time management—”

“One catch though, Potter.” Ashford interrupted impatiently, causing the Gryffindor to look back at him in surprise. Giving the girl a grim smile, he raised an eyebrow and began to speak in a more hushed tone.

“Should you apply for the position...Immediately after you graduate, you have to undergo the rigorous training program we administer to all potentials. The program will take two years—”

Harry nodded instantly, giving him a reassuring smile. “I understand. I will be willing to take that program—”

“—in Romania.” Ashford continued flatly as though he hadn’t heard her, causing the girl’s eyes to widen for the umpteenth time during their discussion alone. When she seemed too shock to speak, Ashford continued, keeping his voice cold and emotionless.

“For the duration of the said program, you are to live in the hidden training facility for two years. Your only contact with your friends and family will be through owls and letters. Exiting the facility is absolutely unacceptable and warrants a full withdrawal from the program.” He continued, ignoring the way Harry was now sputtering in speechless horror.

“After completion, only three out of the fifteen potentials we have chosen will be accepted into the department. Should you fail, your knowledge of the facility’s location and all you have learned will be erased from your memory.” He finished, watching the Gryffindor struggling for the right words to say.

“We’re not forcing you into anything, Jaimee. This is a big risk for you...Should you fail, you would have wasted two years of your life. We want you to make this decision rationally. Take as much time as you need.” Dumbledore told her gently, sensing the conflicted emotions on her face.

Looking back up at Dumbledore’s comforting smile, Harry realized that she never felt more conflicted in her entire life.

She knew she wanted this opportunity. It was calling out to every single waking bone in her body. If she landed this job, she was almost certain that it would be the most satisfying and most fulfilling thing she could ever do with her life.

But...TWO YEARS?! She thought sadly, already imagining the reaction on Draco’s face when she told him. As the heir to his family, it was crucial that Draco took a wife for himself by the end of March – the deadline for the marriage of all male heirs of traditional pureblooded families.

It is only after a proper marriage that Draco can succeed his father as the next Head of the Malfoy family – after which he is required to produce an heir within two to three years. If she accepted this program now and postponed their marriage for two years, Draco would...

Draco would most probably have to marry someone else anyway for his family. She thought sadly, a heavy pang of realization flooding her chest. I...I can't...I...I love him...I can't...She closed her eyes and sighed, burying her face into her hands in dismay.

Ashford and Kingsley both watched her for a long moment of silence as she seemed to fall into her own thoughts, considering the consequences of her decision. Then, with a heavy sigh and a sad smile, she looked back up and gave both Ministry Officials a firm, decisive shake of her head.

"Kingsley...Mr. Ashford...I appreciate the opportunity and you both taking the time to inform me of this chance. But...I'm afraid...I'm going to have to respectfully decline the offer." She began, causing Kingsley to sputter in disbelief and Dumbledore to bite back a fond smile.

"Potter, are you crazy?! Why?! This is the dream you wanted since—"

"Like I said, I appreciate the offer." Harry interrupted before Kingsley could finish his tirade, giving all three men a forced, cordial smile. "I shall be there tomorrow for my Auror Qualifying Exam, Kingsley. Again, thank you Mr. Ashford...I believe I'd better get to my classes now." She stood up to leave but Ashford held a hand up, indicating for her to remain in her seat.

When she gave him a curious look, he smirked at her and indicated for the other two men to remain silent. After a long pause, he began to speak in a low drawl again. "I had a feeling you were going to react this way, Potter...I know all about your engagement to Draco Malfoy. And I know what's stopping you. Pureblooded traditions can be a drag...I would know. I came from a traditional pureblooded family myself." He told her, chuckling when her eyes widened in surprise.

“Tradition is only tradition for as long as it isn’t broken, Miss Potter...I am certain the Malfoys could learn this from you personally like the way I made my family understand my career path.” His voice trailed off at this, causing Harry’s eyes to twitch in irritation when she couldn’t understand him.

“Mr. Ashford, you have my answer—”

“Either way...I won’t accept it. Not yet.” He cut her off firmly, reaching into his pocket and pulling out a small white envelope with her name imprinted on the cover. Taking it from him with trembling hands, she looked at it uncertainly before flicking her gaze back to Ashford’s emotionless eyes.

“I have personally requested that I be the administering proctor for your Auror examination tomorrow. I want to see your abilities for myself. Keep that envelope with you. I know you will pass tomorrow’s exam...But...I want you to think about this. Should you change your mind...Feel free to read it.” He drawled softly, his voice dropping to a whisper.

Harry was silent after that, refusing to meet their gazes as she stared at the sealed envelope in her hands. Then, sighing in defeat, she nodded and finally stood up, casting a small smile and nod of farewell to Dumbledore’s worried glance.

“Professor...Kingsley...Mr. Ashford...” She excused herself softly, biting her lip as all three of them returned her nod easily. Finally, she shoved the envelope into her robes and made to stride out of the office – only to be stopped by Ashford yet again just as she reached out for the doorknob.

“Potter.”

Turning back to look at him, she raised an eyebrow at the expression of warning in his eyes.

“You are to tell no one of the details you have learned of my department today. Is that understood...?” He asked softly, his voice calm but the warning emanating from his words was unmistakable.

Nodding her assent, she managed another cordial smile before she turned and finally walked out of the office, closing the door gently behind her. Leaning her head back against it for several seconds, she closed her eyes and let out a heavy breath of exhaustion.

You did the right thing, Harry...

A/N: Did she really? Do you guys think so too? :mysterious smile: In any case, I have already introduced the final and biggest conflict in the story! It won't be long till the story ends now! Things are starting to heat up! :giggles: I hope you all enjoyed this chapter. If you all paid attention, you may have just gotten a preview of what the sequel will be all about. :wink:

Next Chapter: Harry's Qualifying Exam, More Blaise/Hermione and Ron/Lorraine, and Anton pays Harry a visit :Dun-Dun-Dun!:

So how is it so far? As always, I need your wonderful reviews, comments and suggestions to get the ideas flowing in my head! SO PLEASE REVIEW! Cheers!

## Chapter 30 – Perfection

The very next morning, Harry found herself sitting comfortably on the grass near the lake's edge – watching with a heavy heart as the sun rose and eventually began to cast its rays on the water's clear surface. Reaching over to throw a pebble lazily onto the water, she watched the ripples for a long moment before sighing and hugging her knees closer to her chest.

She leaned against the tree behind her – the same tree she and Draco had been leaning against just a couple of days ago – and watched blearily as several students began to walk to the Great Hall for breakfast.

Her fingers absentmindedly caressing the ring on her finger, she gazed up at the clear blue sky in deep thought. It had been exactly one full day since her fight with Draco. He hadn't owed her about the business conference like he had promised he would before their fight and she felt more horrible than ever.

He's really angry with me. She thought, wincing when she recalled the harsh words she had said to him.

She had written to Sirius last night about Ashford's proposal – leaving out the part about what the Unspeakables actually do – and told him about how she had declined the offer regardless. Her godfather had been furious and had berated her immediately about how she was giving up her dream and how stupid it was for her to compromise her future because of Draco.

But I love him...That should be reason enough right? She asked herself silently, burying her face into her hands in dismay. A part of her wanted so badly for her to accept this opportunity but the other half clung on firmly to the blonde Slytherin. She didn't know how she would be able to cope being separated from him for two years.

She had two paths to think about. One – she could become an Unspeakable and lead the life she had always wanted to since she had beaten Lord Voldemort and promised herself that no one would ever have to lose their parents the same way she did. Two – she



could marry Draco and live happily ever after with him as though the ghost of her former self never existed.

Somewhere in the back of her mind lingered a third option. One that involved the path of her not having to choose between herself or Draco and that was the one choice she wished she had.

He'd never accept it anyway. It goes against 'tradition'. She thought in frustration, recalling how his eyes had flashed furiously at her blatant refusal to bear him an heir right away. Up until their engagement party, Draco had always made sure to cast the proper protection charms on her after sex to make sure she didn't conceive. It was only two nights ago that he had purposely forgone the act altogether. In her drunken state, Harry had barely remembered to cast it on herself before going to sleep – much to Draco's irritation.

He wants to get married, he wants children. He wants a family. He wants everything I can't give him yet. She realized, carefully looking down at herself and inspecting her body in slight hesitation.

She was easily met with her own slim figure – pale skin marked in several areas with his love bites and bruises. For a minute, she imagined her stomach expanding and carrying a baby inside – and she choked in panic, shaking her head furiously to clear the idea away.

Good god! I know nothing about being pregnant! She thought in horror, her face pale in realization. In fact, there was still so much she had to learn about her female form and so much more she had to understand about life as a woman before she could allow herself to marry him.

Sighing in defeat, she yanked out several grass leaves from the ground and began fiddling with them in her hand, tossing them aside a moment later. She leaned back against the tree and wrapped her arms around herself in a gesture of self-reassurance.

Near the Hogwarts entrance, more and more students began to rush out – oblivious to her presence as they went about their activities for

that morning. Several of her friends saw her and waved at her to join them but she shook her head, giving them a grateful smile either way.

She was just about to lose herself in her own thoughts again when a familiar, drawling voice suddenly spoke her name from behind. Thinking it was Draco, she felt her heart leap into her chest and she whirled around, her eyes wide in nervousness.

The minute she saw who it was, however, her eyes narrowed instead and she raised an eyebrow, staring in confusion into the smirking face of Anton Malfoy. He offered a disarming grin as he approached her from the entrance, looking as handsome as the first time she had seen him in robes of blue and with strands of blonde hair falling into his eyes.

Unsure of how to react, she sat there motionlessly and waited until the half-veela had plopped himself down next to her in silence. He stared off into the same direction of the sun she had been doing for the past hour. Harry finally lost patience and began to speak, directing his attention back to her.

“Anton, I hardly think you came all the way here from France to join me in enjoying the scenery. What do you want?” She asked suspiciously, reaching into her shirt and pulling out the anti-veela charm she wore – and had been wearing – since the night of the debutante ball.

Chuckling lightly at the wariness of her actions, he grinned at her and surprised her further by suddenly offering a hand, a light twinge of mirth in his eyes. “I believe we’ve never properly met outside the context of the hunting season, Potter. My name is Anton Malfoy.” He began, meeting the confused, incredulous look on her face.

When she hesitantly took his hand and he continued to speak, her eyebrows receded further into her hairline. “I’m a Cancer. My favorite color is blue. I hate the subject Arithmancy, I suck at it. In fact, I actually hate studying altogether. I’m a total klutz. I used to be really shy, I had a horrible stutter when I was ten years old and I really love food.” He told her with a smile, finally earning a genuine laugh from the Gryffindor.

Following his lead, she began to rattle off several of her human characteristics, smirking when she saw the surprise on his face. “Jaimee – Formerly Harry – Potter. I’m a Leo. My favorite color is green. I love Charms, I bloody hate Transfiguration. I used to be freakishly scrawny and scruffy until I turned fifteen. I once nearly swallowed a snitch and once had to regrow all the bones in my arm. I love flying and I used to be a boy.” She ranted, causing Anton to laugh at her last two sentences.

“Well if that doesn’t start up a conversation, I don’t know what will.” He commented lightly, earning another grin from her as she shrugged and let go of his hand to run a hand through her tangled hair. “Which one? Swallowing the snitch, regrowing my bones or being a guy?” She asked in good humor, looking back up and seeing the amusement dancing in his blue eyes.

“That your favorite color was green actually.”

Again, she couldn’t help laughing at the deadpan, sarcastic tone of his voice and after several moments, he joined her – chuckling and imitating her actions by picking up a small pebble and tossing it thoughtfully into the lake.

They both fell into another awkward silence after that, Jaimee watching him tossing more pebbles into the water and Anton keeping his gaze planted on the water’s surface. When she couldn’t stand the tension anymore, she opened her mouth to speak but he beat her to it, finally turning to give her an uneasy half-smile.

“I...realize I’m not exactly who you want to see right now. Especially after all that’s happened...” He began hesitantly, unconsciously brushing several strands of blonde hair out of his eyes. When she nodded, he bit his lip and carefully considered his next words.

“Actually...I came here to...apologize.” He stopped and looked up to check the reaction on her face, waiting for her to nod in acknowledgement before he spoke further. “I’ve been a complete prick since the moment I met you. And for that, I’m sorry.” He

managed to say, sighing and averting his gaze from her surprised face.

Again, she opened her mouth to say something but he continued to speak before she could. "I never really wanted to hurt you or anything. I guess...for once...I just really wanted to succeed in something that Draco couldn't." He admitted, earning a look of confusion from the girl beside him.

"What was it about Draco you found so horrible that you tried to make up for it with women, then?" She asked bluntly, causing him to blink in surprise at her direct question. Then – as though he had just realized it for the first time – he laughed and shook his head at himself.

"I suppose I just wanted to feel good about myself for once. Draco was...Well...He was Grandfather's favorite since the day we were born. Growing up...He was everything I wasn't. Top grades. Perfect speaker. Perfect looks. Perfect everything!" Anton blurted out and at his words, Harry's eyes widened incredulously.

"You don't think you're good-looking, Anton?! Are you crazy?! You're bloody gorgeous—"

"I look effeminate, Potter! Why do you think Draco bullied me all those years?! He called me a pansy-boy for Merlin's sake! And to be honest, I am one! I was home-schooled with Lorraine because it's dangerous for half-veela children to be around others growing up. I never learned how to talk to someone until I turned thirteen!" He told her, wincing when he saw her jaw drop open in surprise.

"R—really—?"

"Of course by that age, Draco was already the most loved son not only of my family but of nearly every pureblooded family in England! He was so bloody perfect that I hated him for it! I swore to myself that I would outdo him somehow..." He explained, unaware of the slight dimming in Jaimee's eyes when she heard his words.

So it's true then...Draco has always been obsessed with perfection. Perfect son. Perfect life. Perfect family. Perfect girl. Bloody perfect.

She thought in angry realization, a heavy, sinking feeling in her chest as she listened to Anton in silence.

“Since I was five, every time he would visit...He, Crabbe, Goyle and even Winchester on some occasions would spend the afternoon mocking me for my ‘less than masculine’ features and my stuttering. They’ve hung me upside down on chandeliers, pushed me into a freezing lake, locked me in the attic for hours...Pushed me down the stairs...” Anton stopped raised a hand to massage his temples, shaking his head to clear the memories away.

All the while he had explained all these things, Harry felt herself growing angrier and angrier at Draco for treating his cousin this way. It wasn’t until Anton spoke again that the full weight of what he was saying finally came crashing down to her in full realization.

“The worst part of it was... No one chastised him for it. Not even my grandfather. They all seemed blind to his actions because he was the perfect Malfoy son while I was the stuttering, shy idiot who failed his classes and couldn’t seem to make any friends.” Anton paused for a minute to catch his breath before he continued, his face growing paler in his own realization.

“It was like my own family was allowing him to do all that because I wasn’t as ‘perfect’ a Malfoy son as Draco or Byron or the others.” The words seemed to be spilling from his lips now but Harry didn’t dare interrupt him, watching him with a small, understanding smile slowly forming on her face.

Anton doesn’t realize it...But I understand him perfectly. Perhaps now more than ever. She thought silently, her eyes slowly softening when she saw the genuine regret in his.

He sighed and looked up to meet her gaze, giving her a weak smirk. “So when I grew into my veela genes, I decided I would get back at him for everything he’s done. I set myself on becoming the perfect Malfoy son there was. I stole every single girlfriend he introduced to the family. I forced myself to become more charming. More dashing and eloquent. More sophisticated. More enchanting.” He laughed harshly at this, shaking his head in disgust at himself.

"It seemed to work for a time but it did nothing but set my own family further against me again. By some sick twist of irony, I ended up as the backstabbing veela snake while Draco is still the good son. Joke's still on me, I guess." He scoffed, his eyes narrowed in silent anger.

When Harry couldn't think of anything to say to him, he seemed to snap out of his self-induced trance and blinked rapidly, turning to give her an embarrassed grimace. "I—I'm sorry, Potter. I didn't mean to rattle off about your fiancé like that...You must think I'm pathetic trying to trash-talk Draco now." He grumbled, shoving his hands into his pockets in silence.

Harry opened her mouth to answer him but he spoke again, his words coming out in a nervous rush. "A—Anyway, I...I suppose what I really want to say is that I'm...I—I'm sorry. I really am. I never intended to play you...N—None of my hostility was d—d—directed at y—you." He chose his words carefully, blushing in humiliation and refusing to meet her eyes.

Forcing himself to laugh, he nervously tossed another pebble into the lake – revealing his tension when the pebble splashed noisily against the water. "H—Haha...I—I seem to be s—s—stut—tering...S—sorry. I t—t—tend to s—stutter again when I—I'm n—n—nervous..."

"Anton, I—"

"So...I—I don't know. I j—just...I hope th—that we'll event—t—tually become f—friends or s—something." He managed lamely, wincing again when he heard his stuttered words. "If not, th—th—that's fine t—too. I just...w—w—wanted you to know th—that none of my a—a—actions were aimed at y—you. If anything, I'm s—s—sorry I even d—dragged you into this familial d—d—d—dysfunction in the first p—place." He managed to stammer out, finishing with an exhale of breath.

He was more than eager to jump back up and bolt the hell out of there to save himself from further humiliation but he stopped when he felt a warm, soft hand on his. Blinking in surprise, he followed the

pale limb on his fingers all the way up to Jaimee's silent features, easily recognizing the unspoken forgiveness in her green eyes.

She didn't say anything but the gesture spoke for itself. As she withdrew her hand from his, he swallowed the lump in his throat and sat there in a long, uneasy silence. Again, both their eyes were drawn to the rays of sunlight cast over the lake's clear surface and it wasn't until the first bell signaling the start of first period classes that Harry finally turned and faced him.

"...You know...Had you been honest with me in the beginning about all this...I actually think I might have liked you more."

Choking at the teasing mirth he heard in her voice, Anton turned wide blue eyes to her laughing face in disbelief. Too shocked to say anything, he watched her struggling to contain her laughter before she began to explain herself.

"You actually didn't have to explain anything to me at all, Anton. I kind of figured it out all on my own. Draco...was kind of horrible when he was a child. Even I hated him back then for it..." She told him, causing Anton to scoff in mild amusement.

"Fortunately for me, Potter, the things he did to me weren't fueled with 'sexualtension'. Cause then we'd have a serious problem." He drawled teasingly – his stutter gone – and hearing the humor in his voice, Harry laughed again in spite of the blush spreading onto her cheeks at his words.

"Draco's...He's not as horrible as he used to be. I can testify to that...Now, I'd say you'd find that you actually have more in common than you think." She began uncertainly, hesitating when she saw the open mockery of his sneering face.

"Yeah right—"

"I know where you're coming from, Anton. I know how it feels to be bullied and to grow up with such low self-esteem – the difference between us, of course, is that I didn't take it out on bedding dozens of

women to pull it back up.” She added as an afterthought, bringing an easy smirk and light chuckle to his lips.

“But sometimes...You just have to...let these things go. Otherwise, you’ll spend your whole life fixated on that one moment in your past until you realize you’re never going to move on.” She told him softly, watching as a flurry of different emotions all at once began flickering on his face.

He clenched his jaw tightly in tense refusal but he refused to say anything else. Despite this, Harry went on anyway. “Take it from somebody who’s been through hell and back. Including the pains of menstrual cramps.” She kidded, finally managing to ease a weak laugh from him.

“I don’t think it’ll be that easy for me, Potter...But thanks anyway. I’m...actually glad I came here today to talk to you.” He told her, turning and giving her a crooked grin. She returned this with a nod and just as she was going to stand up, he spoke again, his hand reaching rather reluctantly into his jacket pocket.

“Uhm...Before you go...There’s something I’d like to ask you about.” He started, a slight edge of hesitation to his voice that instantly drew her attention. When she sat back down and stared at him, he finally took out the small slip of paper from his pocket, unfolding it and holding it up to her eyes.

Seeing the familiar paper, the 500,000 galleon check Lawrence Malfoy had addressed to her requesting her to marry Draco, Jaimee’s eyes widened – first in surprise than in angry suspicion before flicking back over to the unreadable expression on Anton’s face.

“This is—? H—How—? Where did you get this?!” She demanded angrily, snatching it out of his grip and instantly stuffing it into her bag. Anton flinched at the angry tone of her voice but slowly began to explain himself, his voice firm and emotionless.

“Elisa Cartwright...Draco’s ex-girlfriend had it with her” Jaimee felt a jealous lurching of her stomach at the words ‘Draco’s ex-girlfriend’ but



she held her tongue, redirecting her attention back to the blonde half-veela.

“She knicked it off one of her friends from Hogwarts. But that’s not important, Potter...What’s important is...What does it mean? Did grandfather pay you to marry Draco because if that’s the case, then—”

Before she could stop herself, Jaimee had raised a hand and had slapped it hard across his face, the harsh sound made from heavy contact of her palm against his soft cheek echoing in the silence. Anton blinked several times in shock, clutching his red cheek before turning to glare at her in angry disbelief.

“What was that for?! Why did you slap me—”

“That’s rubbish! I have never been more insulted in my life! If you are even implying that I agreed to marry Draco because I was paid to, then I suggest you leave now Anton before I kick your arse—” She stopped midsentence when his face suddenly relaxed with relief, the tension leaving his shoulders.

“Thank Merlin.” He breathed out, smirking when he saw the look of confusion on her face. When she raised an eyebrow in question, he shook his head and indicated to the check in her bag. “For a minute there, I thought you weren’t as real as you seemed. Personally, I kind of like the fact that you offset Draco’s personality in every way imaginable. I love that it ticks the prick off.” He admitted, earning a surprised laugh from the Gryffindor.

His face sobered after that and his voice dropped to a low whisper. “So I take it grandfather approached you and asked you to marry Draco in exchange for that...?” He asked, waiting until she nodded rather reluctantly before continuing. He sighed and shook his head in disbelief.

“And you refused huh...? Merlin, you’re...something else. If I was a girl, it would take more than that amount to get me to marry a smarmy bastard like Draco. Say, are you sure you wouldn’t want to change your mind and marry me instead—” He stopped and ended up

laughing when she raised a hand and gave him a light punch to his shoulder.

“Don’t push it, Anton.” She growled at him although she couldn’t stop the laugh that came about at his words. Anton grinned at her but nodded, finally raising himself up to his feet. He offered her a hand to help her up, waiting until she had brushed off her robes as well before speaking again.

“Well, that was actually the reason I came here today. Believe it or not, I wouldn’t want any money-grabbing whore marrying any of my cousins—”

“I understand.” Harry assured him, silencing his words with a simple nod and smile. He returned the gesture before taking several steps backwards from her, shoving his hands awkwardly into his pockets.

They both seemed to struggle for something else to say. Anton looked as though he wanted to say something else and it wasn’t until Harry laughed at his uneasiness that he managed a sheepish smile and reached up behind his neck.

“Actually...If you’d take it...I want you to have this.” He unclasped the simple pendant on his neck, holding it up for her to see the silver charm. Taking it from him and holding it up to her eyes to inspect the strange symbol, she looked back up at him with question clearly in her face.

He answered her with a quirky smile. “It’s the Corno. The Italian Horn. It represents protection against the evil eye. Some people believe it also provides sexual power and good luck. In my case, I’ve had it infused with magical enhancements to strengthen my veela allure tenfold. It’s why my attraction powers seem so much stronger than other veelas.” He admitted, causing Harry’s eyes to widen in surprise.

“So this is the little bugger, huh...? So why are you giving this to me? It’s not like I can use it or that I’d want to.” She asked pointedly, cocking an eyebrow at him but he shook his head when she offered it back to him.

“Please keep it for me. I don’t need it anymore.” He told her and this time, she didn’t bother hiding the look of pure disbelief in her eyes. He laughed again, highly amused by the expression on her face. “Trust me....I think if this entire experience has taught me anything, it’s that you actually get the better girls without that.” He indicated to the charm before giving her a pointed look, causing the girl to flush slightly in embarrassment.

“I—I’m not a girl—”

He raised an eyebrow at her pink cheeks, his smile transforming into a teasing smirk. “No...I guess not. No girl could ever resist me.” He kidded again, earning himself another genuine smile.

“Keep telling yourself that.”

They grinned at each other, the seemingly brick wall of tension between them melting away until they were comfortably enjoying the other’s presence. Finally, after what seemed like another five minutes of silence, he finally turned back towards the castle.

“Well...I’d better get going now, Potter. I have a date with a lovely French Beauxbatons debutante. Who am I to deny her my wonderful company?” He drawled, suddenly reverting to his Malfoy aura yet again but in spite of herself, Harry laughed at how she saw right through him.

“Date, huh...? So how do you go about your dates now without your veela allure?” She called back to him, holding up his pendant in her hand. He stopped and turned around slowly, allowing her to see the mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

“Ah...But I said that pendant enhances my veela allure. The allure doesn’t come from the charm itself...It’s in my blood – an inborn gift of mine. Who am I to deny myself use of my god-given talents?” He winked at her, causing the girl to roll her eyes at his words.

“And here I thought you were turning over a new leaf.” She said out loud, chuckling when he pretended to consider her words, shrugging about a minute later.

"I will...I just have to meet the right girl to help me. Since you're out, I'm off to look for one." He responded evenly and just as she rolled her eyes again, he gave her one last smirk before turning and sauntering back to the castle in silence – his footsteps lighter than when he had first arrived.

"...Anton...?"

He had just reached the entrance doors when he turned around again for the last time, blinking when he saw the expression on her face. She gave him a pointed look, carefully placing his pendant into the pocket of her bag with the discarded check.

"Just...Try to go easy on Ron, okay...? I heard about his two-week trial courtship...He's my best friend. I think he really cares about your sister."

He considered her words carefully, his eyebrows fused together in thought. Then – giving her one last smile – he simply winked again before heading back inside, his form eventually disappearing somewhere along the narrow corridors.

"Are you sure you didn't leave anything at home, love?" Blaise asked Isabella as they walked through the halls of Hogwarts that afternoon. The black-haired child shook her head, hugging her stuffed toy closer to her chest in fear when several students peered curiously down at her.

Chuckling, Blaise reached down and affectionately ruffled her hair. "Alright then. What do you want to do today? Do you want to go to Hogsmeade?" He asked her just as they rounded a corner and passed by some seventh year Slytherins hanging out near the classrooms.

Pansy and Daphne both waved at him and he nodded briefly to return their greeting, looking down and seeing Isabella giving both girls a disgruntled glare of dislike. Seeing him looking at her, she scowled

and shook her head fiercely, causing Blaise to smirk and chuckle to himself.

“I’m not dating them or anything, Isabella. They’re just my friends. Come on, let’s get you over to your new room.” He told her but before they could walk on further, Pansy and Daphne had bounded over to them with flirtatious smiles on their faces.

“Blaise, darling! How lucky for us you’re here!” Pansy cooed, linking her arm through Blaise’s and pulling him aside. Isabella glared up at her and tried to untangle the Slytherin girl’s arm from her brother but her efforts proved useless when Daphne linked her arm through Blaise’s other one as well.

Blaise managed a forced smile, his eyes immediately flicking back to his sister to make sure she was still near him. “Ladies, what can I do for you, today?” He asked cautiously, wincing when Pansy just gave him a flirtatious smile and a bat of her eyelashes.

“Well... We have a Transfigurations assignment due later this afternoon...Unfortunately, Draco isn’t here to help us with it. Do you mind lending us your notes instead?” She asked sweetly, only to be followed by Daphne a short while after.

“Yeah, Blaise...Pansy and I are really horrible at Transfiguration, you know that. Please?” She looked up at him with an imploring look in her eyes until Blaise relented and sighed, nodding and gesturing for Isabella to wait by the fountain.

“Hold on, I’ll go get my notebook in my room. Isabella, stay right there. I’ll be back in three minutes, don’t move.” He ordered her firmly, waiting until his younger sister nodded and sat down on one of the benches near in mild annoyance.

She watched as both girls – Pansy and Daphne – hurried off after Blaise while clinging tightly onto his arm. Swinging her dangling legs impatiently on the bench, Isabella turned her eyes to watch the fountain in front of her instead, brightening up when she saw the clear water shooting up in graceful arcs around the area.

Just as she was going to jump up and walk toward it, she heard a sharp sound somewhere off in the distance and her eyes shot up instantly, wide with fear as she inspected her surroundings. Since most of the students were in the Great Hall having their lunch, the entire area was deserted save for one of two students passing through every now and then.

Clutching her stuffed toy fearfully to her chest, Isabella carefully stood back up and began walking towards the fountain, her eyes roaming around her for any sign of her brother. As soon as she got to the fountain's ledge, she sat down on it silently, reaching down to touch the cool water.

Giggling silently to herself, she bent down to wet her hair, her fear suddenly forgotten. Then, as she stood back up, another sound – this time sharper and much louder than the first one rang clearly into her ears and she jumped up, stumbling painfully down to the floor on her leg.

In the distance – near the vicinity of the Forbidden Forest – her small eyes widened and glistened with tears of fear when she caught sight of three dark shadowy, cloaked figures rushing off into the trees only to disappear immediately after within the forest's darkness.

Completely terrified and her ankle bruised from the way she had fallen onto the ground, Isabella began to cry silently into the stuffed toy in her hands, her tiny shoulders shaking with sobs and her small frame trembling with fear.

She must have been in that position for a couple of minutes before a soft, gentle voice suddenly spoke up behind her. Tensing, she whirled around, hiccupping in relief when she saw a worried Hermione kneeling down behind her in concern.

The Head Girl slowly helped the little girl back up onto her feet and almost immediately, Isabella ran against the other girl, wrapping her tiny, trembling arms around Hermione's neck and burying her tearful face into the older girl's shoulders.

Sensing the little girl's immense fear, Hermione used a shaking hand to caress Isabella's black tresses, shushing her quietly in a soothing voice. "Shhh...Isabella, what's wrong...? Are you okay? Did you hurt yourself...?" She asked, looking down and inspecting the small bruise forming on her ankle.

Isabella shook her head fiercely and pointed a frantic finger towards the Forbidden Forest, her eyes wide with the words she couldn't say yet were threatening to spill out of her mouth.

"What? What is it? Did the Forbidden Forest scare you? Sweetie, there are dozens of wild beasts in the forest but they're nothing to be scared of. You're safe in Hogwarts...I promise." Hermione reassured her but once again, Isabella shook her head angrily, tears spilling down her cheeks.

"What? What's wrong, what did you see—"

"Hermione! Isabella! What happened?!"

Hermione never got to finish her sentence as she whirled around and saw Blaise running up to them, panic and worry clearly written all over his handsome face. "What? What's happened?! Is she alright, is she hurt?—"

"She's fine, Blaise. She must have fallen somehow, she's scratched her leg a bit." Hermione assured him as she handed the trembling six-year-old to her brother, smiling sadly when Blaise hugged her tightly to him and planted a kiss on the top of her head.

Again, Isabella shook her head and pointed frantically in the direction of the Forbidden Forest, trying to force her brother to look in that direction. At this, Blaise raised an eyebrow at Hermione, clearly demanding an explanation but Hermione just sighed and shrugged.

"She must have seen something that frightened her in the Forbidden Forest. I don't really blame her; even I don't know everything in there." She said out loud, watching as Blaise nodded in

understanding and hugged Isabella to him, rubbing soothing circles on her back.

“It’s okay, love...You’re safe, alright? I promise you nothing’s going to take you away again.” He whispered into her ear, oblivious to the smile Hermione gave him as she watched him handling his sister in a rare display of genuine affection.

Once Isabella seemed to have calmed down and was resting her cheek silently against Blaise’s shoulder, Hermione looked up and gave both of them a small smile. “Isabella...I’ve got some hot chocolate and some story books in my room. Do you want to hang out there today?” She asked softly, laughing when Isabella’s head instantly shot up from her brother’s embrace. She smiled shyly in response, nodding her agreement.

Blaise chuckled as Isabella squirmed in his arms until he put her back down. “How did your examination this morning go, ‘Mione?” He asked her as Isabella took Hermione’s hand and followed the couple as they headed over to Hermione’s Head Girl room.

The Gryffindor grinned at him, her brown eyes suddenly twinkling with excitement. “I think...I think I did well, Blaise. I really do. We’ll be getting our results on Friday so hopefully, we’ll know then.” She told him, blushing when he bent down and rewarded her with a lingering kiss on her cheek.

“Of course you did...You’re brilliant. Do you mind heading off first with Isabella? I’m just going to go check on something first.” He said, indicating backwards towards the other end of the corridor. When Hermione nodded, he shot her a grateful smile, ruffled Isabella’s hair and walked back in the direction of the fountain in silence.

Looking around him to make sure no one else was watching, he took several steps towards the nearby window and peered very closely in the direction of the Forbidden Forest once more, his eyes narrowing in silent doubt and suspicion.

Sighing, he tried to pass off the feeling as stress and ran a hand through his dark hair, casting the suspicion in his thoughts away.



Perhaps he was exaggerating things. After all, Hermione had made a valid point about the creatures living in the Forbidden Forest.

However, as he nodded to himself and began walking back towards Hermione's room in calculating silence, he couldn't help but feel an uneasy feeling of suspicion pricking at his neck. Although he couldn't exactly put his foot on it, he could sense something was definitely amiss. Something did not feel right. He could feel it in every bone of his body.

He could only hope as he was wrong.

Giggling behind her hand, Lorraine tried to ignore their assigned chaperone's rolling eyes as she turned and met Ron's equally amused gaze beside her. They sat on one of the benches along the Hogwarts gardens that afternoon, flipping through some of the old family albums Lorraine had brought with her when she had arrived that morning back at Hogwarts.

They had been going through her old childhood pictures for the past hour, laughing every now and then when they were met with the amusing sight of Lorraine or her cousins ten years ago. Ron pointed to a particular picture of a chubby blonde girl with pigtails eating chocolate ice cream in one of the photographs, raising an eyebrow at her with a grin.

"Were you really that chubby when you were younger?" He teased her playfully, causing Lorraine to flush in embarrassment and punch him lightly on the arm.

"I told you I liked chocolate! Don't tease me, do you have any idea of the horrible diet I had to put myself through to lose all that baby fat?!" She pouted childishly, rolling her eyes when Ron flipped the page of the album again and laughed when he was met with another picture of her – this time in as a toddler – chasing Anton around the room for a stolen chocolate bar.

"You must have really been an adorable baby, then." He told her with a smile, leaning down and giving her an affectionate kiss on her

cheek. She blushed again when their chaperone simply grunted and turned her head in the other direction in bored irritation.

Turning the page once more, Ron found himself staring into an old photograph of Lorraine when she was about five years old. Her arm was wrapped around the shoulders of a younger Anton Malfoy, both children grinning and waving into the camera.

Beside this picture was another picture of Lorraine and a familiar looking blonde and Ron barely contained the shock on his face when he realized who it was. "That's...Malfoy! I mean, Draco!" He blurted out, laughing gleefully when he saw the picture of a five-year-old Draco Malfoy glaring at the camera in exaggerated boredom.

The blonde Slytherin looked exactly like he did now except that his hair wasn't gelled back nor did he have his usual smirk on his face. Last on the page, Lorraine indicated to a larger photograph and following her gesture, Ron felt a sickening lurch of dismay rising in the pit of his stomach.

There – splashed out in all their glory – was a formal family picture of the entire Malfoy family all decked out in elegant black dress robes. This was obviously a slightly more recent picture as Lorraine and her cousins looked in the age of their early teens – about thirteen – and were seated at the very front on a long, white Persian couch to emphasize the black of their attire.

Behind them stood the slightly older Malfoys – Ron didn't exactly know all of them – and at the very middle of the group stood Lucius Malfoy in his ever present dignified stance, his wife standing proudly beside him and Lawrence Malfoy standing several inches to his left.

None of the figures in the family photograph seemed to be willing to move or fidget around in their positions. Ron confirmed this when he saw the look of extreme discomfort that showed on Lorraine's wrinkled forehead as she continued to sit with her back straight and her chin up.

Chuckling, Ron looked up from the picture and met Lorraine's hesitating cringe with a smirk. "Blimey...Your family has really got a

thing for the ‘I’ve got a broomstick stuck up my arse’ look, don’t they?” He teased her lightly, causing her to relax and reward him with a small smile and shrug.

“They just like formality—”

“Formality? Bloody hell, Lorraine. None of you are smiling in here! You’re all smirking! Look!” Ron pointed to the photograph again. Lorraine sighed, taking the album from him and shutting gently before setting it back down onto her lap.

Looking back up at him, she offered him a small smile and pointed to the album in his hands.

“Why don’t you show me your family now?” She asked gently, her blue eyes brightening when Ron answered her with a wide grin and ecstatic nod.

“Presenting, the Wacky World of Weasleys!” He kidded as he flipped open the album and almost immediately, Lorraine laughed when she was confronted with an explosion of bright colors in the first few photographs.

As opposed to the dull black and white colors of her own family pictures, the Weasley family album was bursting with cheerful colors – each photograph bright with the feelings of laughter, warmth and happiness radiating from each captured memory.

Lorraine laughed when she saw a picture of a gigantic sixteenth birthday cake blowing up in Harry’s face, followed by another photograph of Ron sporting an elongated nose and blue hair underneath his own seventeenth birthday banner.

Fred and George seemed to be in nearly every photograph – either in the background of a disastrous explosion during a family event or right in the center, watching with evil sneers as their unsuspecting victim was just about to pop an experimented candy into their mouths. This was followed up by more pictures – a polka-dotted Bill chasing after George, a highly furious Percy sporting a ‘Big Head Boy’ badge and a crying Ginny with several green pimples on her face.

Lorraine laughed at each one, listening with a genuine smile as Ron recounted the story of each disastrous photograph with relative ease of memory. When they got to the last page, they saw a family picture of the Weasleys as well and Lorraine sat up, inspecting the image closely.

The picture seemed to have been taken during Bill and Fleur's wedding. Harry and Hermione were also in it – back when Harry was still male – and were wearing genuine grins on their faces. Lorraine paused to give Ron a teasing smirk.

"I never knew that Harry was this handsome as a guy...I probably would have gone after him had he remained male." She teased and Ron groaned loudly, giving her a warning glare. "Please don't tell me I still lose to my best friend even when he's a girl now!" He answered good-naturedly, causing the blonde girl to laugh at the irritation in his voice.

In the picture, Ron and his family were all sporting goofy animal hats on their heads and were haphazardly strewn all over the small family couch, the others plopped out onto the floor. Ron sat in an Indian-style position at the very front, grinning up at the camera like he didn't have a care in the world.

Chuckling, Ron failed to notice the sad, envious smile on Lorraine's face as he slowly closed the family album in his hands. Looking up at their chaperone to check if they were still being watched, he leaned over and placed a kiss on the blonde's forehead.

"So...What do we do about this, Raine...?" He finally asked her softly, directing her soft eyes back to his gentle features. Blinking herself out of her thoughts, she nodded and seemed to hesitate before she answered, her eyes flicking nervously at their chaperone before she spoke.

"I...I don't really know." She began, biting her lip in nervousness. "I love my family, Ron...You love yours too from what I can see. But they're both very...very different. And they probably won't agree on anything." She continued, sighing and brushing a stray strand of blonde hair out of her eyes.

At this, Ron managed a quick grin and he placed a hand over hers, squeezing her fingers in comfort. "Well...They probably agree that we both must have been pretty stupid if we forgot to cast a simple protection charm within the fifteen minute time frame after we 'had sex'." He whispered so that the chaperone couldn't hear, causing Lorraine to redden at his words.

Seeing the humor in his eyes, she allowed herself to relax and laughed at his quip, nodding in agreement. "Well...We can always say that we were caught up in the moment or something and we fell asleep right away." She teased, hiding another blush when Ron raised a curious eyebrow at her words.

"Would there be any reason to get caught up that much...?" He asked her in another low, playful voice and this time, Lorraine couldn't prevent the blood rushing into her cheeks at the underlying meaning behind his words.

"Why don't you give me the answer to your own question, Ron...?" Came her teasing reply, reversing their positions and instantly causing Ron's cheeks to redden at the implication of her words. Her eyelashes fluttering down to hide her eyes, Lorraine smiled to herself and stood up from her seat, brushing her skirts off as she did.

"I'll be right back...I just have to go to the bathroom." She told him, nodding once for her chaperone to accompany her. The elderly woman returned the gesture and followed her back towards the castle, leaving Ron staring at Lorraine's retreating back in thought.

Once they were gone, the Gryffindor let out a nervous exhale of breath and finally took the small, velvet box he had been fiddling with in his jacket pocket the entire time. Holding it up to the sunlight, he flicked it open and gazed at the humble but beautiful diamond ring underneath.

It wasn't as glamorous or expensive as the one Draco had bought for Harry nor was it anywhere near the exquisite designs of the rings Zabini or Winchester had given Hermione and Lorraine...But this one was his.

Ron bit his lip and fingered the ring carefully, feeling a tremor of nervousness in his chest.

While they were having lunch earlier that afternoon, Ron had approached Harry and had further humbled his pride by asking if he could borrow the amount of money he needed to buy Lorraine a proper engagement ring.

Of course – being Harry – she had offered to let him borrow more from her account or even give him the money without the debt but Ron had adamantly refused, assuring her that he would pay it back in installments once he was working and he had a job.

Although hesitant, his best friend had agreed and with that, Ron had bought Lorraine the most beautiful engagement ring he could afford. It wasn't the cheapest in the store – nor was it the most expensive but it had the brightest diamond and was the most beautiful there for him. So naturally, he chose it for Lorraine despite the slightly heftier price tag.

Looking at it now, however, he gulped and quickly placed it back in his pocket. Will she even like it? What if she laughs at it and asks me how much this is?! I couldn't handle the shame and humiliation –

“Ron...? Sorry, I took so long. Are you okay?” Lorraine's soft voice broke through his thoughts as she reappeared behind some rose bushes and sat down next to him, their chaperone following suit beside her several moments later.

He blinked startled eyes up at her before nodding and managing a nervous smile. “I—I'm fine, Lorraine. Actually, I—uh—I have something to ask – no! I have something to give you...” He began uncertainly, reaching his hand back into his pocket.

She nodded in slight confusion but offered him a calming smile, oblivious to the way their chaperone's eyes were widening in anticipation behind her. “Sure, Ron...What is it?” She asked, watching as he wiped the beads of sweat forming on his forehead.

Then – steeling his nerves – he heard two sharp gasps as he bent down on one knee and slowly raised the opened velvet box up to her eyes. Keeping his gaze on his shoes, he began to speak – failing to notice the tears that were starting to gather in Lorraine’s wide eyes.

“I know I promised that I would give you the best of who I am, Lorraine. I meant every word...But unfortunately, this is the best of who I am right now. I need a little more time to be a better man for you...In the meantime, will you...will you marry me...?” He asked meekly, his voice barely audible but she caught every word.

Holding back a fresh wave of tears, Lorraine managed a tearful laugh as she shot up from her seat and pulled Ron up onto his feet, taking the diamond in her hands before throwing both her arms around him in a tight, loving embrace.

“Y—you idiot!” She chastised weakly, her voice cracking with restrained emotions. “I thought I already made it clear to you that you already are the best man for me! Now, in the future...No matter who you are and what you give me, you always will be!” She assured him tearfully, causing his chest to squeeze tightly at the genuine warmth he felt in her words.

Gulping down his own emotions, he couldn’t find the voice to speak and instead, gently pulled himself away from her arms. Taking her hand in his, he managed a nervous smile before he carefully slide the ring onto her ring finger, admiring the way the diamond seemed to glow amidst her pale skin.

Then, raising her hand up to give her fingers a kiss, he looked up and smiled when he was met with nothing but happiness and love in her eyes. “It’s beautiful, Ron...I I—love it! I—It’s exactly the design I want...H—How did you know?” She asked him in amazement, holding the ring up to the sky and admiring the way it caught the light.

As he answered her, he tried to ignore the sniffing sound their chaperone seemed to be making and focused his attention on her beaming face. “I...I don’t know. The minute I saw it, I knew it was for you. I had to visit about five jewelry stores before I got it right—”

He stopped talking when she leaned forward and pressed her lips against his, muffling his next words with a sweet, chaste kiss. Once she pulled away, he blinked stupidly at her, causing the blonde to giggle at his expression.

As she continued to inspect the ring, the happiness on her face began to sober and she looked up at him, biting her lip in concern. “B—But are you sure about this? It was probably really expensive and I—I mean... I don’t really need a ring or anything right now, it’s just a symbol. So—”

Ron silenced her with a laugh and held a finger up her lips, indicating for her to stop talking. Once she did, he raised her hand up to his lips and kissed it once more, intertwining their fingers tightly together. “Don’t worry about it, Lorraine...Money doesn’t matter. The ring is yours.” He spoke firmly, wincing when he heard their chaperone blowing her nose loudly on a tissue.

Laughing when she saw the wincing expression on his face, she smiled at her beaming chaperone before turning back to give the redhead a curious smile. Then, feeling like the happiest, luckiest girl in the world, she threw her arms around him and exclaimed in the loudest voice she could.

“THEN YES! I’LL MARRY YOU RON WEASLEY!”

“Byron?!”

Harry froze just as she ran out onto the Quidditch field that afternoon. She had just collided against an equally surprised Byron Malfoy just near the slowly lengthening line of Hogwartian examinees waiting to have their Auror exam administered.

Up ahead – among one of the first few in line – Harry caught a glimpse of Neville waving, albeit nervously, to her. Easily returning his smile, she waved back several times before turning back and meeting Byron’s slightly flushed face.



“I—I’m here to talk to Vincent Ashford, actually. I was told he’d be here scouting out his Hogwartian—” He stopped midsentence and blinked at her in realization, a knowing grin spreading onto his face.

“Of course! It’s you, isn’t it? You’re the top Hogwartian recommendation! I can’t believe I didn’t figure it out sooner!” He blurted out, laughing and lightly slapping his forehead. Harry raised an eyebrow at him in mild confusion, trying to process his words together.

When she figured out what he meant, her own eyes widened as well and she barely prevented a very undignified, ecstatic exclamation. “You mean—you’re the potential from Sapientia?!” She cried out, laughing excitedly in delighted surprise.

Byron grinned and shrugged, laughing as well and clapping his hand against her raised one. “Yeah...I guess I am. Ashford came to our school a couple of days ago and gave me some time to think about it...And well...I’m here to tell him that I accept the opportunity.” He told her with a grin, causing Harry’s eyes to widen even more.

“Wow. So you’re actually going? To the training program in Romania, I mean? Weren’t your parents angry or something – something about being a Malfoy son and needing to marry or whatever—?” She asked again in a soft whisper, beckoning him in line with her.

He placed himself behind her, rolling his eyes at her question. “Well father was...At first. But then I convinced them that it wouldn’t really matter. Besides, Draco’s the heir so he’s the one who has to bear all that tradition crap on him. I, on the other hand, can do what I want.” He told her, giving her a conspiratorial wink.

She laughed and nodded, idly checking her watch and noting the time before answering him. “That’s a change, huh...? Although I never knew you were a fighter. You never seemed to mention anything about it.” She pointed out, raising an eyebrow and at this, Byron gave her a teasing half-grin, half-smirk.

“Ah but just because I never challenged you, Harry...It doesn’t mean I don’t fight well. I’m a metamorphagus, after all. I just never really

found it in my nature to chase after you that's all. As hot as you are, you're not my type." He admitted with a chuckle, earning himself an incredulous look.

"Not your type, huh...? So may I ask who exactly is your type? I haven't heard anything about your sexual exploits—" She was immediately cut off when a harsh, impatient voice suddenly spoke up behind them, cutting her off mid-sentence.

"Potter. You're here. I was almost afraid you wouldn't show up." Ashford spoke curtly as he, Kingsley and several more black-robed officials walked onto the Quidditch field, stacks of applications and parchments in their hands.

As soon as the handsome man had walked up to them, Harry turned just in time to see Byron's cheeks flushing an interesting shade of pink. Unaware that she was looking at him, the metamorphagus bit his lip uncertainly, his eyes fixated on Ashford's incredibly well-built physique.

"M—Mr. Ashford...Do you remember me—"

Ashford looked up briefly from the papers he was rifling through, cocking a single eyebrow at the stuttering Malfoy in acknowledgment. "Ah yes. Byron Malfoy. Sapientia's outstanding top student and fighter. Have you thought about the program?" He asked briskly, his cold blue eyes flicking back to his papers before Byron could manage a response.

Byron looked hesitant to speak, blinking awkwardly and waiting until Ashford had finished talking impatiently with one of the Aurors who had approached him. The black-haired Unspeakable looked irritated at having been distracted and instantly snapped at the lower-ranking official in annoyance, causing the poor man to immediately back off and hurry away.

Once the man had gone, Ashford looked up again and gave both Byron and Harry a distracted look, raising his eyebrow in growing impatience. Byron flushed deeper at having Ashford's stern glare on him – oblivious to Harry's stifled smirk and laughter.

“Uhm...Mr. Ashford, I’ve decided to accept the opportunity you offered me. I’d like to become an Unspeakable, sir.” He spoke cordially – perhaps the most formal tone Jaimee had ever heard him speak in. Ashford merely raised an eyebrow, a lazy, answering grin spreading onto his handsome face.

“Very well. I will have you listed immediately for the program. What about you, Potter?” He suddenly directed his attention to Harry, who immediately stepped back in surprise.

“I’m actually here for my Auror exam, sir. I believe I already gave you my—”

“Ah rubbish. I’ll talk to you later after I proctor your exam. I’m needed somewhere else now.” He interrupted her rather rudely, ignoring Byron’s attempt to speak further when he immediately turned and hastily sauntered off the field back towards the castle, a flurry of lower-ranking Aurors scurrying about after him.

Once he was gone, Bryon seemed to regain his composure and turned to look at her with sympathy clearly written in his golden-brown eyes. “You declined the offer, huh...? Is it Draco...? Has he said anything to you?” He asked, watching her reaction carefully.

She scoffed and answered him with a derisive snort. “What would it matter? The training program is two years and besides, Draco would never go for it. We’re getting married the day the Unspeakable potentials are scheduled to leave, remember?” She pointed out and hearing this, Byron’s eyes widened in realization.

“Oh that’s right...I completely forgot!” He flinched to himself and gave her an apologetic smile. “I’m sorry I won’t be there to see your wedding then.” He offered sheepishly and seeing the truly guilty look on his face, she laughed and waved his concern away.

“Don’t worry about it. Just kick some arse out there, alright? It’ll probably be the best way to get that sexy prick to notice you.” She added teasingly, causing Byron to choke in surprise when he saw the knowing look in her green eyes.

“Excuse me?”

Harry grinned mischievously, wagging her eyebrows up and down. “Do you think I’m blind, Malfoy? I saw the way you were checking out Ashford when he was here. So that’s the deal, huh? You don’t like me because you go for blokes?” She said out loud, immediately causing Byron’s eyes to widen further as he hurriedly shushed her to keep her voice down.

“Shhh! Are you crazy?! We’re surrounded by Aurors, he could find out somehow!” He hissed angrily at her, causing her to hide her laughter behind her hand at his panicked expression. “Relax, geez...Nothing to be ashamed of. Ashford is hot...Even I would go for him. He’s just seems like an arse though.” She added as an afterthought, causing Byron to snort in amusement.

“Exhibit A. Meet the future Mrs. Draco Malfoy.” He indicated to the ring on her finger and she scowled at him, flushing in embarrassment. Looking around before she spoke, she leaned down to whisper something in his ear.

“I heard he’s dating someone else though... I don’t know who but I don’t think it’s anything serious.” She reassured him when she saw the disappointed look on his face. Holding back a smile, she looked up curiously at him just as the line in front of them began to move forward – signaling the start of the first examinees.

“So...How long have you known you were gay...? Do your parents know? Do any of your cousins know?” She asked him, fusing her eyebrows together. He laughed at the awkwardness of her tone, giving her a consoling pat on the shoulder.

“Relax yourself, Potter...Being gay or bisexual is not a major issue in the Wizarding World. In fact, it’s about as normal as marrying a veela or werewolf or whatever. It’s only frowned upon in the case of pureblooded marriages since they need heirs to carry on the bloodline.” He told her, raising an eyebrow when she gave him a pointed look.

Realizing what her look meant, he flushed and shook his head hastily. "My parents don't exactly approve of my orientation but they don't say anything against it. Draco's always known, I think...As well as Lorraine and the others. I've never told Grandfather yet, I think he would freak." He shuddered upon imagining the reaction of the older Malfoy.

Harry opened her mouth to ask him something else but it seemed Byron wasn't finished. He rewarded her with a quirky grin. "And technically, I'm more of a bisexual leaning more towards men than women. There are only... certain women I can tolerate." He quipped, causing her to smirk and roll her eyes at his explanation,

"More towards men than women? I have one word for you, Byron. GAY. Blatantly checking out Vincent Ashford's arse proves it. Speaking of which, here he comes." She whispered with an evil smirk under her breath, her eyes flicking over his shoulder.

Blushing once more, Byron froze up and spun around to see Ashford striding back into the room, his black robes billowing dramatically behind him and his glossy, windswept black hair catching the attention of nearly all the female – and male students – in the area.

Even Jaimee couldn't help checking him out once more and seeing this, Byron's eyes narrowed at her, causing the Gryffindor to step back and laugh, holding up her hands in an 'I surrender' pose. "You do know that if you get into his department, you can't date him because then he'd be your boss right?" She told him, earning herself an irritated scowl.

"I'm a Malfoy. I always get what I want."

She rolled her eyes upon hearing the familiar phrase, suddenly reminded at how innately spoiled Malfoy children were naturally bred to be. Looking back up front, she saw Neville, pale and sweating, stepping through the magical barrier the ministry officials had erected in front of the line.

The barrier was black and solid – preventing any of them from seeing what happened inside – and the students who stepped out of it after

about fifteen minutes were either pale and trembling or sweaty and exhausted. Their written exam had already been administered earlier that morning and though Harry was rather confident with her written answers, she couldn't help wishing she had studied more for the exam so her essays would have been longer.

She and Neville had been the first ones to finish and pass their examinations that morning and judging from the smile on the other Gryffindor's face, she could tell it had gone well for him too. Now, however, the boy looked completely terrified and the Auror standing near the barrier entrance had to roll his eyes and shove him inside.

Byron eventually spoke up again, rousing her from her thoughts. "Anyway...I'd better get going. I have to get back to school pretty soon; I only came here to confirm my participation." He told her, zipping up his jacket and stepping out of line.

Turning to give her one last grin, he bent down and formally kissed the back of her hand, causing her to roll her eyes at the gesture. "I would appreciate it if you wouldn't tell anyone about my newfound love interest. That being said, good luck with your exam, Potter." He winked at her, turning to leave.

Just as she waved at him and he got back to the castle entrance, Harry felt the line move forward again and she gulped, taking a couple of steps closer to the barrier's entrance. At this point, there were only about five more students ahead of her and the first one was already heading inside, bumping into Neville as he walked out.

Looking at the other Gryffindor's face, she noted his exhausted but otherwise relieved expression. "Neville! How'd it go? You did well?" She called out to him as he passed her, earning herself a thumbs-up from her housemate.

"I think so...They test your strength first. Then your weakness. Watch out for the second one, that's where they'll kick you where it hurts. Since mine is fear, I had to fight all the beasts I was afraid of all at once." He shuddered at the memory, his face paling again when it had just regained its color.

Laughing, she clapped him lightly on the shoulder, giving him an encouraging smile. "At least you're done. Wish me luck." She told him nervously and he grinned at her, patting her on the back as well. "You won't need it, Harry. But in any case, good luck." He gave her one last smile before heading back to the castle, leaving Harry staring nervously at his retreating back.

After a couple more minutes, the second and third person in front of her had already gone in and she now stood right outside the barrier, waiting for the person who had walked in ahead of her to finish her exam. Just as she was taking several deep breaths to calm herself, she heard a chuckle behind her.

Turning around, she saw Ashford – this time without his team of panicked Aurors – heading right for the barrier entrance. Twirling his black, lacquered wand casually along his fingers, he raised an eyebrow at the Auror guarding the barrier entrance and he opened the entrance immediately, bowing for the Head Unspeakable to enter.

Before he did, he turned and gave Harry one last smirk. "Good luck, Potter. I'll be expecting more from you." With that, he inclined his head briefly at her and entered in one swift stride, the guarding Auror closing the entrance shut tightly behind him.

If it was even possible, Harry felt even more nervous after his words than she did before and this was confirmed when the person in line behind her gave her a tissue, telling her nicely to wipe the beads of nervous sweat forming along her brow.

Giving the guy a meek 'thank you', she accepted the tissue and hastily wiped her forehead, taking in more deep breaths in an effort to calm her racing heartbeat. Once the remaining, agonizing three minutes had passed, the door finally opened again and the guarding Auror ushered her inside just as the last examinee walked out – her face looking crestfallen with disappointment.

She had just seen the wide, spacious inside of the combat area inside the barrier before the entrance behind her snapped shut, trapping her in the deafening silence. Walking further into the arena, she finally noticed the long stretch of notoriously acclaimed Aurors

seated along a long, rectangular table near the edge of the arena – just touching the barrier’s walls.

Peering at them closely, she saw that Kingsley was easily one of them – along with Ashford and her DADA teacher, Slewvick. She didn’t personally know the other Aurors but their faces were familiar perhaps from the Daily Prophet reports or from the media.

Gulping, she stopped right in front of their stone-hard faces and waited for them to give her instructions. Their entire table was silent for several seconds, each of them reading through her application with unreadable faces.

It was Kingsley who finally spoke up, his voice echoing dramatically along the barrier walls. “Jillian Aimee Potter. Gryffindor. Hogwarts Academic Rank 3. Top student in DADA.” He read off her school records, ignoring the way Harry began biting her lip in nervousness.

“Y—Yes, sir—”

“All examines shall remain silent during the exam procedure unless directly asked a question!” The gruff-looking woman next to Kingsley snapped, causing her to jump in surprise. She nodded nervously and stepped back.

Amidst all this, Ashford looked heartily amused and was simply leaning backwards against his seat, his arms crossed over his chest and his lazy blue eyes resting on her form. Compared to the others, he was easily the youngest wizard there, as well as the only one there who didn’t have a stack of papers in front of him.

Harry tried to focus on him to calm the intimidation in her chest but upon seeing the obvious aura of power and conceit emanating from him, she gulped and decided against it – looking back and focusing on Kingsley again.

“Tell us, Potter. If were to ask you... What is your strength...? More importantly, what is your weakness?” The black-haired, bearded man seated beside Ashford spoke up lightly, his beady eyes peering at her through his thick spectacles.



Taking a deep breath, Harry steadied herself before answering them in a clear voice. "My weakness is easily constant vigilance, I guess. You know that, Kingsley. As for my strength...I've always believed it to be...speed and strategic fighting. I consider myself more of a speedy fighter than a strength fighter. Besides, I don't exactly have the tools for strength anyway. At least not anymore." She kidded lightly, trying to break the tension.

None of them laughed.

Gulping painfully, her laughter died and she began biting her lip again, waiting for them to respond to her words. Kingsley seemed to glance briefly at Ashford as though to ask him a silent question and he nodded, the smirk never leaving his lips.

Sighing, Kingsley nodded and turned back to look at Harry. "Alright, then. The first part of your exam shall be – speed and strategy." He stopped and Ashford lazily raised his wand, conjuring up a mass of black smoke that seemed to swirl the entire area around her.

After a couple of seconds, the cloud of smoke cleared and Harry found herself circled by a whole crowd of black, magically animated mannequins armed with swords and spears. Waving his wand once more, Ashford followed this up by conjuring up another crowd, smaller than the first, of white mannequins armed with basic wands that contained the simplest magical spells – stupefy, expelliarmus, reducto and the five elements.

Pale with disbelief, Harry turned to look at Kingsley again and saw the other man giving her a grim smile. "Show us your strength. Defeat all fifty enemies. You have five minutes." Harry's eyes widened again, her jaw dropping open in shock

"B—but—"

"Timer starts...now!"

Harry didn't have any more time to think when all at once, the mannequins closed in on her and lunged forward, forcing her to duck

and dodge their advances with immediate ease. One of them managed to scrape her upper arm and grunting in irritation, she flipped herself out of the center of the crowd. Taking several steps backward, she shook her head as she inspected the wound.

Then – snapping her attention back to the crowd of lifeless mannequins now steadily approaching her, she narrowed her green eyes and finally yanked her wand out of her pocket, twirling it once around her fingers.

“I’m pissed now.”

Neither Kingsley nor Ashford could contain the impressed grins on their faces at the events that followed after. They watched, in a matter of less than five minutes, as Harry maneuvered and fought her way through the mess of mannequins with effortless skill, using not only her wand and physical attacks but also some of the weapons of the defeated mannequins against them.

One of the mannequins grabbed her from behind, seizing her by the neck and she growled, hurling it up over her head and down to the floor. Then, picking it back up, she spun it around once, knocking the surrounding mannequins around her down and leaving a mess of disembodied mannequin limbs along the ground.

Another mannequin sent a fire spell flying right at her face and she shielded it easily, deflecting it back with a magnifying spell which sent it blasting – tenfold – towards the others around her, sending them flying backwards again.

“Twenty seconds!” Slewvick called out to her in warning and she stopped in exhaustion, looking up in irritation when she one remaining mannequin left. The black figure hurtled towards her, raising the axe it held in its hand up as it approached her with slow, steady footsteps.

“Ten...Nine...Eight...”

“Ugh. Every time I see mannequins, I think of gowns. And every time I think of gowns, I think of shopping.” Harry muttered under her breath

as the mannequin neared her, the axe gleaming threateningly against the light.

“Seven...Six...Five...”

“And that really pisses me off.”

She gave the mannequin one final sneer before she turned and propelled herself into a simple but powerful spinning kick, using the heel of her shoe to knock the mannequin’s faceless head right off from its body. Giving one final step, the mannequin teetered dangerously – the weight of the axe setting it off balance – until it finally keeled over and collapsed onto the ground.

Exhausted and her shoulders heaving for breath, Harry looked back up and was met with the raised eyebrows of the watching Aurors, all of which were now looking at her in open curiosity. Ashford leaned back against his chair again with one raised eyebrow.

The others busied themselves with scribbling something on their papers before Kingsley cleared his throat and spoke up, directing Harry’s attention back to him. “We shall proceed to part two of the examination.” He drawled lightly, nodding and gesturing to Ashford.

The younger man sneered and waved flicked his wand towards her again, easily reviving the mannequins and this time, adding about fifty more to the set. Hiding a groan of exhaustion and exasperation, Harry found herself being circled again and she looked up, meeting Ashford’s eyes in barely concealed irritation.

“Second part of your exam: a test of weakness. You have ten minutes. Defeat all 100 mannequins.” He told her, causing her eyebrows to shoot up in confusion.

“But isn’t that just the same as the first—”

“Without the lights.” He finished with a sneer, flicking his wand again and instantly killing the lights around them, plunging Harry into total darkness.

Shit.

She heard her own panicked breathing as she began to feel around blindly in the dark, her heart pounding nervously in her chest. Hearing Ashford's amused chuckle, she could tell they were still watching her somehow – perhaps with some special spell to help them see in the dark. That meant any screw-ups from her wouldn't go unnoticed.

"Ow!" She flinched when she felt a painful stab somewhere near her left shoulder. Instinctively, she jumped away from the direction only to crash into a nearby mannequin in front of her. The mannequin shoved her backwards, causing her to cry out again and scrape herself on the shoulder against another spear.

Damn it...This will never work. She thought desperately as she managed to cast a feeble protection charm around herself, wincing when she heard the loud clangs of about a dozen swords and spears hitting against it a couple of seconds later.

In front of her, Kingsley spoke up again, his voice sounding laden with mild concern. "Twenty seconds have elapsed, Potter. Start fighting!" He barked loudly, jolting her attention back to focus. She nodded upon hearing his words and bit her lip in thought.

Just like that blindfold with Draco...Come on, Potter! She urged herself silently in her head, shutting her eyes tightly and tensing her muscles in anticipation. Then, without so much as a second thought, she took down her protective barrier and charged through the crowd around her, feeling her way through the fight with her ears and hands.

A sharp sword slashed loudly through the air as it plunged down towards her. She heard the sound of its blade's whistling easily, causing her to smile to herself and whirl around, transfiguring her wand into a shield to block it.

Behind her, she heard about a dozen footsteps hurtling in her direction and she ducked just as another mannequin lunged noisily at her, aiming to grab her neck. The mannequin ended up hitting the one in front of her, knocking the others out of her path.

Another mannequin lit up its wand with a fire spell and she caught the scent of fire immediately, whirling around in suspicion. The mannequin flicked its wand at her and she ducked and spun around it, the fire burning through the mannequins behind her instead.

She raised her wand and pointed it at the direction of the scent, conjuring a flurry of aerosol. Hearing – and smelling – about a dozen mannequin bodies burning at the sudden flurry of flames that engulfed the area, she smirked and backed away, running towards the remaining group behind her.

As this happened, the Aurors watching met each other's eyes with a small smile and nod, their eyes already indicating their unspoken agreement regarding her performance. Ashford watched Harry with a growing grin, his fingers still lazily twirling his wand in idle boredom.

Just as the girl finished the last set of remaining mannequins, Ashford chuckled again and flicked the lights back on. In the middle of the combat arena, Harry collapsed onto her knees in utter exhaustion – her face flushed with exertion and looking completely out of breath.

In spite of this, however, the expression on her face was one of satisfaction and she looked up at them, waiting for their reactions. Kingsley and the other Aurors were beside themselves with astonishment and they rose to their feet, grinning and clapping loudly.

"Excellent, Potter! That was bloody brilliant!" Slewvick exclaimed loudly, clapping the loudest and throwing his favorite student a proud smile. The others beside him nodded their agreement, talking and whispering their comments amongst themselves.

Ashford, however, remained seated and watched this all happening with a passive look in his features while stretching his legs out comfortably in his seat. Once the other Aurors had seated themselves again, Kingsley spoke loudly with a definite elation in his voice.

"Outstanding display of skill, Potter. You may exit the examination area now." He told her, nodding at her before writing down his final comments on her application form. Managing a weak smile to return

his praise, Harry nodded and made to walk out, her footsteps slow and unsteady.

She barely managed to get within ten feet of the exit when Ashford finally spoke up again, his voice a calm, unimpressed drawl that cut through the sudden silence like a sharp knife.

“You’re not finished yet, Potter.”

Uncertain as to whether she had heard him correctly, Harry whirled around and blinked stupidly at him, her jaw hanging open in undignified surprise. “S—Sir?” She stammered, watching nervously as the Head Unspeakable rose up to his feet, tossing his wand up and down in his hand.

Ignoring the angry look of confusion Kingsley and the other Aurors were shooting at him, Ashford smirked and slowly walked over to where Harry stood, unbuttoning his cloak and rolling up his sleeves.

“Ashford, what are you talking about? Her examination is over! There are other students waiting in line—”

“Her examination is over when I saw it’s over, Kingsley.” Ashford interrupted him rather rudely, tossing his cloak over at the Head Auror to silence the older man. Kingsley took this as an insult and rose up from his seat, ready to strangle the handsome Unspeakable in outrage.

“How dare you?! You cocky bastard! What is the meaning of this—” He stopped when the gruff-looking female Auror beside him placed a hand over his arm, indicating for him to stay in his seat. Blinking at her in impatience, he turned back to watch as Ashford approached a pale-faced, trembling Harry, stopping a couple of steps in front of her and giving her a charming smile.

Harry narrowed her eyes at him, her hand already ghosting over her wand. “Not to be disrespectful, Mr. Ashford...But I’m pretty sure the other students spoke only of the exam consisting of two parts. I’ve heard nothing about—”

“The final part of your exam, Potter...” Ashford began, emitting a low chuckle as he began loosening the collar of his shirt. “...is simple.” He continued, his blue eyes glinting dangerously as he took several steps toward her.

Jaimee was instantly on her guard and stepped back, snapping her wand up to point at his chest. Ashford grinned widely, still twirling his wand around his fingers. “Survive for five minutes...Fighting me.” He finished, causing all the blood to drain from her face.

“I beg your pardon, Ashford?! I never authorized this—” Kingsley was cut off again, this time by Slewvick, who had glared at him and indicated for him to keep silent. Ashford answered his angry retort with a calm smile, his eyes not on the Head Auror but still trained on Harry’s nervous features.

The black-haired girl was slowly backing away from the Head Unspeakable in growing fear, her eyes darting around nervously for the exit. “I’m well aware of the components of the Auror examination, Kingsley...Forgive me but I just wish to fully stretch the limits of Miss Potter’s potential. I want to see if she’s really as strong as everyone makes her out to be.” He spoke lightly, his fingers still twirling his wand around again and again in an almost mocking gesture.

At this point, Harry had managed to back herself into the wall of the barrier and was breathing very heavily in terror, the wand she held pointed at him trembling in her hands. To her surprise, the smirk on Ashford’s face transformed into an easy smile.

“I see spirit. And I like that. So once again, Potter...Fight me. Five minutes. All I ask.” He drawled slowly, his blue eyes glinting like cold ice as he waited for her response.

Jaimee looked utterly speechless, her jaw opening and closing as she struggled to fight the proper words to say to him. Unable to form a coherent response, she swallowed and shook her head furiously at him, lowering her wand in refusal.

“I don’t think so, Mr. Ashford. I won’t let you manipulate me like that. My exam is over...Excuse me.” She inclined her head briefly at him

and attempted to walk away towards the exit, only to be stopped a minute later when she felt a sudden weight around her left foot.

Peering down, she was taken back in surprise when she saw the large, metal chains tied very securely around her ankles. She let her eyes trail along the chains for several seconds, following it all the way up until it connected comfortably with the tip of Ashford's wand.

'A charming, handsome smile still on his face, he continued to twirl his wand along his fingers again – the effect of which was to propel the chains around her ankle forward until it began dragging her towards him along the grass.

"Gargh!" She cried out as her foot was pulled out from under her, causing her to collapse onto the grass on her back. As he continued to drag her towards him, she struggled wildly to free herself from the chains around her legs.

"Let me go! I don't want to fight you!" She yelled furiously at him, her face contorted with anger but he merely scoffed, a derisive sneer suddenly spreading onto his face. "Who are you trying to fool, Potter? You refused my offer because you want to stay with your precious fiancé!" He taunted darkly, smirking when he saw the fires of anger erupt in her eyes.

"Shut up! You don't know me at all! Don't tell me what I feel!" She screamed at him, growling in angry frustration when none of the spells she casted on the chains seemed to work and she continued to be dragged towards him despite her helpless efforts.

Ashford sneered harshly, raising a single eyebrow in amusement. "Your fiancé is nothing but a spoiled little rich brat who cares about nothing but himself. He's an arse, a coward and he wants nothing else but to expand his bank account! He's not worth giving up your dreams for!" He mocked loudly, blinking in surprise when he saw Harry's green eyes darken to a frightening dark shade of unrestrained fury.



“Don’t you dare talk about Draco! You don’t know anything about him, you bastard!” She snarled at him, giving up all hope of breaking free and aiming her spells at him instead.

The Head Unspeakable just looked bored and raised an eyebrow at her spells, blinking when they immediately fizzled out upon nearing him by a couple of inches. Laughing at both her words and the dismay on her face at the failed attacks, he decided to mock her further and bent down to her just as she reached his feet.

“Of course I know him, Potter. He’s me eight bloody years ago!” He hissed under his breath as he bent down towards her, ignoring the apprehension he saw on her face. “He’s nothing but a selfish, conceited bastard obsessed with perfection—”

“You’re WRONG!” Harry suddenly screamed out, surprising not only Ashford but also the rest of the watching Aurors when she raised her wand and pointed it directly at the chains around her legs.

“ANGUISSSSS ANIMA!”

Hearing the parseltongue spell issued from her lips, Ashford smirked upon seeing that the chains he had wrapped around her ankles had now transformed into two long, vicious black asps – both of which were now climbing up his body and circling tightly around his neck.

While the Unspeakable was still surprised, she took that opportunity to blast him with a simple slashing spell towards his perfect face. She never heard the loud collective gasps of awe from the Aurors watching when they saw this – nor did she notice the look of stunned, unrelenting disbelief that now graced Ashford’s face.

As Harry got back up onto her feet and bolted for the door, she froze in shock when instead of hearing him shouting at her or cursing in anger, she actually heard the Head Unspeakable laughing. With narrowed eyes, she whirled around, growing even angrier when she saw him.

The black asps she had transformed were now wrapped very tightly around his neck and were beginning to squeeze the life right out of

him but Ashford looked completely unnerved, merely continuing to twirl his wand around his fingers. On his cheek was the shallow cut she had managed to inflict on him, the wound bleeding profusely and standing out against his pale skin.

She was just about to taunt him about it when she stopped and watched in astonishment as the severed skin magically began to seal itself right up, leaving no trace of any remaining wound on him except for small remnants of blood that remained on his cheek.

Holy shit...He can heal himself just like that?! Damn git really is strong! She thought in horror, her fear returning full force when Ashford simply flicked his wand once, effortlessly making her useless black asps disappear into non-existence.

Seeing the growing trepidation in her eyes, Ashford finally gave her a mildly, astonished inclination of his head, allowing her to see the curiosity in his icy blue eyes. The next words out of his mouth shocked her into stupefied silence.

"You...You were the first person to hit me...In five years."

Harry forgot all about her anger and gaped stupidly up at him, her jaw hanging open and her voice strangled with half-elation, half-disbelief.

"R—Really...?"

Ashford heard the doubt in her voice and rewarded her with a genuine smile.

"I'd better be seeing you in Romania, Potter."

Her eyes widened again when she pieced his words together and she straightened herself back up, shaking her head furiously in immediate refusal.

"N—No, Mr. Ashford, I already told you I can't go—"

"Your five minutes are up." He interrupted her coldly with a smirk, now raising his wand up and pointing it directly at her face.

Harry looked confused for a minute, looking up to see Kingsley and Slewvick wincing in pain for her sake. Instinctively, she cast another protective barrier around herself and readied her muscles against his next move.

“Alright then! I’ll take you on! Come on and hit me with your best—”

“ATRAMENTIS CORPUSIO!”

“Sho—Urrrrgh...”

The last thing Harry saw just as her feeble barrier shattered instantly against his astonishingly powerful spell was Ashford’s mocking smile and chuckling face. Her mind going completely blank and her body going numb, she fell backwards like a dead, useless lump, her legs giving out on her like two snapped twigs.

As she landed on her back onto the cold grass and her eyelids flickered several times, she heard Ashford’s idle whistling above her, followed by Kingsley and Slewvick’s loud exclamations.

“Damn it, Kingsley! Here’s your goddamn twenty galleons!”

“Ha! I told you Ashford would knock even Potter unconscious!”

And with that, Harry Potter was out like a light.

A/N: Who among you think Harry is going to continue being an Unspeakable? Who among you think she’s going to give it up and stay with Draco? :peers at readers curiously\* Hmmm. I suppose you guys will have to wait and see huh? :wink:

Oh and sorry if there’s no D/H action in this chapter but Draco is in Italy at the moment. Besides, I had to use this chapter to build up more momentum for what’s coming up ahead. :suspenseful music: Any guesses anyone?

Next Chapter: Draco comes back (I couldn't keep him away too long. :giggle: Do I hear loud cheering in the background?), Gryffindor vs. Slytherin Quidditch Match, More Pleasant and Unpleasant Surprises.

## Chapter 31 – Bombshell

It had been an entire week since he had last talked to Harry.

Draco clenched his jaw in rekindled anger as he re-entered his Hogwarts dormitory that morning, his eyes immediately flicking around the room in search of his stubborn, hard-headed fiancé. Fortunately for him, the girl was nowhere to be found and he sighed, collapsing onto the couch and burying his face in his hands.

The house-elves carrying his luggage deposited them silently by his feet. At his nod of dismissal, they bowed before exiting the room with a loud pop. He was just about to shut the entrance to his dormitory when he heard a loud squeal. He looked up halfheartedly to see his friends rushing inside his room, all of which were fully decked out in green and silver colors for the Quidditch match.

“There he is! Our beloved captain and Head Boy is back! Welcome back, Drakie!” Pansy cooed excitedly as she threw her arms around him, depositing herself onto his lap. Before he could react to her blatant ministrations, Blaise, Daphne entered the room after her – the latter carrying a small cake. Crabbe, Goyle and Millicent soon followed, plopping down the couch across from him.

Draco managed a smirk and didn’t bother shoving Pansy off him this time as he looked up and watched the rest of his friends – Theodore and Malcolm – walking into the room as well, both of which were already decked out in their Slytherin Quidditch uniforms.

“What’s all this...?” The Malfoy heir asked curiously as his attention was finally drawn to the cake Pansy held up to his face, on top of which was written in clear green icing – ‘Congratulations!’. Peering up at Blaise’s grin, he raised an eyebrow in question at his best friend.

Blaise shrugged and sat down beside him, indicating to the cake in Pansy’s hands. “I told them about your big promotion last week. Congratulations, Mr. MMC CEO slash President! I hear you’ll be starting immediately after we graduate!” He said, clapping the blonde on his back and at this, Draco smirked and nodded, causing Pansy to squeal again and hug him tightly to her.

“You’re so great, Draco!”

Covering his ears at this and rolling his eyes, Theodore winced and gave Draco an impatient, pointed look. “Pansy and Daphne insisted on baking that cake for you when you got back. I suggest you eat it later, though. We have a Quidditch match in less than an hour and you’re not even dressed yet.” He reminded him, causing Daphne to roll her eyes beside him.

“He just arrived, Nott. Let him breathe. Spoilsport...” She muttered, causing the others to chuckle at the pout on her face. Finally managing to push Pansy off his lap, Draco gave both girls a handsome smile and playful wink. “I promise to eat the cake later, girls.” He assured them, causing Pansy to giggle and Daphne to blush at the action.

“You know I’ll always be supportive of you, Drakie. Unlike Potter. Did you know Anton visited her last week? They looked pretty cozy by the lake when I saw them too.” Pansy quipped in rather loudly, instantly flinching when she was met simultaneously with Blaise’s warning glare and Draco’s loud, angry snarl.

“WHAT DID YOU SAY?!”

The smile on the Head Boy’s face instantly disappeared and in its place was a horrifying glare that caused the entire group of Slytherins to back away in fear. Pansy looked as though she wanted to eat her words and took several steps backward, only to have her wrist snatched painfully by Draco as he yanked her forward and forced her to kneel down in front of him.

“Draco, calm down—” Blaise never got to finish his sentence as Draco snapped again. His voice had come out in a soft hiss but all the Slytherins caught his words and they backed away again, hesitant to stop him.

“REPEAT WHAT YOU SAID, PARKINSON!”

Seeing Pansy cowering up at Draco's seated form in fear, Daphne tried to rush forward to help her friend but Crabbe held her back with a single hand, shaking his head at her in warning. The rest of them watched as Pansy looked up at Draco with imploring eyes, her bottom lip trembling in fear as she stuttered out a response.

"I—I...I mean, I saw Anton in Hogwarts last Tuesday. He w—was talking to Potter for a long time by the lake. I swear, I'm telling the truth! I mean – you saw them too, right Daph?!" Pansy turned desperate, panicked eyes to the other girl.

Daphne broke out into a nervous sweat when Draco's deadly glare flicked from Pansy face to hers. She cowered instantly, managing a nervous smile. "I—I did! He handed her something, they talked for a couple of minutes and he left. They seemed really intimate though—"

At the word 'intimate', the grip Draco had around Pansy's wrist tightened painfully and she cried out, trying to wrench her arm away. Draco ignored her and directed his glare at Blaise, his silver eyes darkening to a near-black shade in his fury.

"Are they telling me the truth?! Was Potter cozying up to my cousin—"

"Draco, you're hurting me!" Pansy whimpered, trying to wrench her wrist away and at this, Crabbe finally stood up, yanking Draco's hand away from the poor girl's arm. "Draco, she said you were hurting her! Geez, don't take your issues out on women!" He shouted, regretting his words about a second later when Draco shot up from his seat and shoved him away.

"How dare you talk to me like that, Crabbe?! Who taught you to talk back?! Maybe you'd like it better if I shove that big nose of yours against a wall and break it?" Draco threatened with a sneer, his face seething with anger as Pansy's words reverberated over and over again in his head.

Crabbe, however, only seemed to grow angrier at the blonde's irrational behavior and walked right up to the Slytherin leader in growing challenge. "Potter's right, Malfoy! You're such a bigheaded,

pompous child! Maybe she's cheating on you because of that!" He taunted and hearing this, Draco saw red. He had just raised a fist when Blaise suddenly rushed forward and placed himself in between the two Slytherins, holding up his hands in an 'I surrender' pose to placate their anger.

"Alright, alright...Everyone calm down! Crabbe, Draco's just a little stressed out. Draco, I'm sure what Pansy and Daphne saw was just a misunderstanding. I talked to Potter yesterday and she said she was concerned that you weren't responding to her letters. She's not cheating on you—"

"HOW WOULD YOU KNOW?! YOU DON'T KNOW MY COUSIN!" Draco exploded, shoving the other boy's hands off him as his angry shout echoed easily along the walls of his dormitory room. Both Pansy and Daphne winced again while the others – Goyle, Millicent, Theodore and Malcolm all chose to remain silent, watching the scene in awkward tension.

Forcing himself to ignore his own growing anger, Blaise took a deep breath before slowly speaking again. "Draco...Now is not the time to lose your temper over a simple allegation. Right now, you're needed at the Quidditch match. I'm sure Harry has a perfectly logical explanation for you afterwards...You have to calm down..." Blaise drawled slowly, watching as Draco finally took a deep breath and nodded weakly, collapsing back down onto the couch.

Crabbe soon followed after him, sitting on the opposite seat and taking several deep breaths to calm his own anger. After a couple of awkward, silent moments, Draco finally spoke up again – his voice sounding more controlled and composed.

"Crabbe...Pans...Daph..." The Malfoy heir simply inclined his head towards them, his eyes flicking briefly over each in acknowledgement. Knowing that this was the best apology they were ever going to receive from him, they nodded back, allowing the atmosphere to ease off once more.

Once everyone had resettled themselves, Draco managed a distracted smirk and turned to look at Blaise again as the Italian heir



sank back down to his seat. "So, Zabini...Before I forget, how goes Weasley's ridiculous courtship of Raine?" He asked nonchalantly, trying to get his mind off the idea of Harry cheating on him with Anton.

Harry would never cheat on me...She's too much of a noble Gryffindor for that. He convinced himself with a nod, feeling slightly better after that as he met Blaise's wry smirk.

"Well...Believe it or not, he actually bought your cousin an engagement ring. A pretty decent one too, from how I saw it. Perhaps Weasley wasn't as bad off as we originally thought." He mused and at this, Pansy scoffed loudly in disbelief.

"Yeah right...A ring like that costs serious money. I wonder where he got that much money in a short amount of time. I doubt he had that on him." She retorted and Draco raised an eyebrow in silent agreement, his thoughts still reverting to Harry every five seconds.

"So how was the conference, Draco?" Daphne asked him curiously and he scoffed, distractedly waving her question away. "Same old business...Winchesters were there too. Wasn't awkward at all." He drawled sarcastically, causing the others to chuckle amongst themselves.

He was just about to ask something else when Malcolm finally spoke up in growing exasperation, pointing frantically to the watch on his wrist. "I hate to interrupt this little reminiscing session, everyone but it's 9:00 and we have exactly 30 minutes before the match starts. Captain, you'd better get your arse there now." He said and at this, Draco smirked and finally stood up.

"Alright, alright. Let's kick some Gryffindor arse, then!"

When is he going to get here?!

Harry felt completely agitated and worried as she and the rest of the Gryffindor Quidditch team rushed out onto the Quidditch field early that Saturday morning for their practice. She knew Draco could be coming back that morning and she was more than nervous as to what she was going to say to him about everything that's happened.

Letting out an intake of breath, she nodded to the rest of her teammates and signaled for them to start their morning jogs around the Quidditch pitch. Once they ran off ahead of her, she reluctantly broke out into an easy jog behind them, her thoughts still roaming in her head.

Already she could hear the small crowds of students piling into the stands for the match and peering around them, Harry caught sight of some of the members of the Slytherin team entering the Quidditch field as well. At the sight of green and silver, she peered at them, her shoulders slumping in disappointment when she noticed that her fiancé was unfortunately still not with them.

Sighing, she took a long swig from the water bottle she held in her hand, picking up her speed until she fell into an easy jog beside Ron. Grunting in exertion, Ron turned to her and gave her a small, consoling grin.

"Hey mate...Thanks again for the money you loaned me the other day. I promise I'll pay it back soon as I can." He piped up, rousing Harry from her thoughts as she blinked and turned to give him a dismissive smile.

"Nah, don't worry about it, Ron. Speaking of which, how did your exam go? I never got to talk to you about it." She inquired curiously, grinning when she saw the slightly cheerful glow in Ron's eyes. "Pretty good, actually...I finished relatively faster than the others. Results should arrive in about a week. I was excited to get out fast since I had a date with Lorraine." He told her, earning a fond laugh from the Quidditch captain.

They paused briefly as they turned the curve of the field, waving to their cheering housemates on the stands. "She loves the ring, by the way. It was pricier than what I expected but seeing her face was worth it." He continued, blushing when Harry gave him a teasing wink.

"Glad to see you nicely whipped, Weasley. I'm sure your exam went well, you'll be wooing her and her family in no time." She assured him,

patting him on the back as they finally caught up to the rest of their teammates in front.

After a couple more minutes of jogging, Harry finally signaled for them to gather around her at the end of the field just as Madam Hooch appeared by the entrance. Huddling in a tight circle, Harry gave them all an encouraging grin and began to prep them up for the game.

“Alright, guys...This is it. Our last match this year...And for us seventh years, perhaps our last match here as Hogwarts students.” She began, peering closely into all their pale faces and chuckling when she saw the nervousness in their eyes.

Ron and Ginny were both supporting their hands on their knees and were breathing heavily while their chasers – Jordan, Dean, and Frankie – looked completely sick, their eyes widening when they heard her words. Their two beaters – Jeff and Hans – grinned and beat their clubs against one another in growing anticipation.

Harry grinned at them, encouraging their excitement with a nod. “Now...The Slytherins have been a really strong offensive team this year. Even after we beat them the first time, they still caught up to us. This is the championship match. We have to show them that we’re really the best! Can I count on you guys?!” She asked them loudly but at this, Jordan grinned and nudged Frankie in the ribs.

“I still say we just have her seduce Malfoy and win it easy. Maybe she can sing to him again.” He whispered rather loudly, earning himself a painful bump on the head when Harry hurled the Quaffle at him in anger. Ron and Dean sniggered while Ginny smirked at her, shaking her head in amusement.

“As I was saying.” She intoned loudly, silencing their sniggers with a furious glare. “Since their frontline is strong, we need to work with defense in this match. Ron, keep your eye on the Quaffle. Chasers, focus on safety rather than attack...Beaters, protect the team from the bludgers as much as possible. The Slytherin beaters will be all over us with those buggers the entire match, I’m sure of it.” She instructed carefully, watching them nod their heads in understanding.

Dean spoke up, directing her attention to his curious gaze. “Will Malfoy be the seeker in the match? Hasn’t he returned yet?” He asked her and at this, everyone turned to look at the said captain’s fiancé, causing her to redden in embarrassment when she realized she didn’t know the answer to the simple question.

“I...I think so. He should be arriving any minute now. Anyway, like I said, Draco has always been more of an offense captain than a defense captain so our strategy should work against them. So, are we ready?!” She finished, turning back to them and giving them all a wide, energetic smile.

When they nodded weakly, she raised her voice – giving an unladylike woot and cheer. “I said, LIONS! ARE YOU READY TO STOMP AND CHEW ON THOSE SNAKES UNTIL THEY BEG FOR MERCY?!” She asked loudly and this time, the entire team answered her with loud cheers, catcalls and whistles.

“WOOHOO! GRYF-FIN-DOR! GRYF-FIN-DOR! GRYF-FIN-DOR!”

Harry grinned at this and nodded, giving each of them a high five as they passed her and began heading to the changing rooms to slip on their uniforms. They continued to cheer and clap loudly to themselves as they ran across the field, earning themselves several ‘boos’ and ‘hisses’ when they passed some members of the Slytherin team near the other end of the stands.

Laughing good-naturedly at this, she nodded respectfully to the other team and was about to follow after her teammates when she heard a loud, friendly shout behind her. Whirling around, she smiled when she caught sight of Isabella, Hermione and Sirius – carrying a cheerfully waving Keira – running up to her from the bottom of the stands.

Harry couldn’t prevent a grin when she caught sight of the adorable Gryffindor Lion hat Keira wore on her head – as well as the opposing Slytherin Snake hat on Isabella’s. The two girls had met when Sirius had brought Keira with him as he was visiting two days ago. They had instantly become inseparable playmates.

Hermione had told her all about Isabella Zabini's condition around that same time and since then, Harry had suggested to the Head Girl that perhaps a playmate her age would be a better option. Regina seemed to have been equally thankful to have a playmate for her daughter and had brought the little girl with her to Hogwarts the entire week, leaving the redhead under Harry's watch.

It was while she was taking care of Keira that Harry realized, for the first time since had been turned into a woman, that perhaps having children of her own one day wouldn't be such a bad idea after all. She certainly had no problems with children. In fact, she loved kids.

It's the being pregnant part and getting them out that's going to be a problem. She thought to herself with a shudder, blinking herself out of her thoughts as Sirius and Hermione finally reached her and gave her a tight hug.

"I just came over here to wish you good luck, Prongslet! Regina's arriving soon. Lorraine and Anton are already here." Sirius told her, indicating to the two blondes seated on the Gryffindor side of the stands. She waved to them and they easily waved back, giving her friendly smiles.

"Good luck, Harry! Go and win that Quidditch cup for us!" Hermione gushed out as she pulled Harry into a hug again, patting her encouragingly on the back. From her place on Sirius' shoulders, Keira leaned down and gave Harry a kiss on the forehead, giggling and pointing to her hat.

"Gluck, Harry...I'm a lion today! So I'm cheering for you! Paddy's a lion too!" She held up her stuffed lion and Harry laughed at this, reaching up to give the little girl a kiss on her cheek as well. "Yes, he is. And knowing that you're cheering for me, then I have to win now don't I?" She chided, winking at her when Keira nodded ecstatically.

Behind Hermione – clutching the Head girl's hand – Isabella made a face and stuck out her tongue in dislike. She pointed vehemently to her Slytherin hat, causing the others to laugh at the gesture. "We know, Isabella...You're cheering for your brother's team. Speaking of which, I better find him. Good luck again, alright Harry?" Hermione

told her once more, waving before ushering Isabella off towards the Slytherin stands.

“Yeah, I’d better go find Regina too. Good luck, Harry! See you after the match!” Sirius told her, bending down slightly so that Keira could give Harry a hug. Then, with a final wave, they walked off and headed for the Gryffindor stands, leaving Harry staring after him in thought.

Before she made to walk to the changing rooms, she shot one more look at the Slytherin Quidditch team, her heart sinking once again when she saw that Draco had not arrived yet. With a dejected sigh, she turned and jogged off to get changed for the match.

“Cartwright.”

Stopping right at the entrance to the Quidditch pitch and decked out in his full Slytherin Quidditch uniform, Draco’s eyes narrowed as he was met with Elisa Cartwright’s beautiful, smiling face. She was standing right at the Slytherin side entrance for the team players, wrenching a handkerchief nervously in her hands.

“Hey Draco...How was Italy...?” She began uncertainly, wincing when she saw the irritated flashing in his eyes at her question. Steeling her nerves, she continued anyway without waiting for his answer. “My father said he saw you at the conference.” She drawled slowly, biting her lip when Draco merely shouldered his Firebolt and gave her a mocking smile in response.

“It was lovely. Your father accosted me right in the middle of a formal dinner promising me a joint venture if I took you back. Your family is truly pathetic, really.” He told her snidely, smirking wider when his teammates chuckled behind him as they passed him and heard his words.

Elisa colored in indignation but shook her head and stepped toward him, forcing the Head Boy to stiffen and back away in disgust. When the Slytherins behind him looked as though they were going to interfere, Draco held a hand up and indicated for them not to anything just yet.

“Why are you here, Cartwright? I’ll give you ten seconds to give me a reasonable answer. If not, I’ll have Crabbe and Goyle here escort you off the school grounds.” He threatened lazily, cocking an eyebrow at her when she turned and looked fearfully in the direction of the two large boys that had walked up behind her.

Nodding, she took another step forward and gave him what she hoped was an imploring gaze. “I’m not here to try anything with you, Draco. I’m only here to warn you...Because I don’t want you getting hurt again.” She started, hiding a smirk of her own when she saw a look of worry flicker for a split second in his eyes.

Glaring suspiciously at her, he narrowed his eyes in impatient query – silently instructing her to continue. Looking around the field to make sure she wasn’t heard, she winced when the cheers began to grow louder and forced herself to speak above the noise.

“It...It has something to do with your fiancé...I believe I know something about Potter that you should learn as well before you marry her.” She continued, taking a cautious step backwards when Draco’s eyes slowly began to darken into a frightening shade of black-gray.

“What would you know about Jaimee?” He asked in a dangerous hiss, oblivious to the fact that the Slytherin team members behind him hastily walked on ahead when they recognized the definite anger in his voice.

Elisa heard it too but forced herself to continue. “She...She’s nothing but a money-grabbing, deceitful snake.” She began uncertainly but the anger in Draco’s eyes instantly disappeared and was replaced with amusement when he heard her words.

Laughing to himself, he shook his head and gestured for Crabbe and Goyle to take her away from him. “That’s ridiculous. You obviously don’t know her, Cartwright. She’s not you! Potter is...” Draco stopped and before he could stop himself, a ghost of a smile made its way onto his face.

“She’s perfect...” He said out loud, shaking his head when he heard the pure admiration in his words. Smirking at Elisa’s reaction, he snapped his fingers towards Crabbe and Goyle and the two immediately picked her up by her robes, turning to carry her back outside the pitch.

“Wait! Draco, listen to me! We’re not done here—”

“Trust me, Elisa. We’re done. In fact, I should have been done with you the moment I met you.” He interrupted her coldly as he passed her and made to walk into the Slytherin locker room entrance. Just as he reached the door, Elisa screamed loudly from several feet away, her words forcing Crabbe and Goyle to stop and look at her in shock.

“She’s a fake, Draco! The only reason she agreed to marry you is because your grandfather paid her to! 500,000 galleons to be exact!”

Draco’s face paled and he froze in mid-step, a sharp, excruciating pang ripping right through his chest. It took him several blinks and gulps before he found his voice and he turned around, meeting Elisa’s triumphant smile with a look of angry denial.

“You lying bitch!”

She laughed bitterly at his accusation, shrugging Crabbe and Goyle’s arms off her and walking right up to him until she was looking right up into his ashen face. “I saw the check myself, Draco. It was signed by your grandfather, addressed to her about a couple of weeks ago.” She told him, smirking wider when she saw Crabbe and Goyle’s jaws dropping in shock.

Rolling her eyes, she gave all three Slytherins a derisive scoff. “Why do you all look so shocked?! You didn’t honestly think she would have agreed to willingly marry the one person responsible for ruining her life? You turned Harry Potter into a woman, Draco! You weren’t even punished for it! Naturally, she would hate you!” She pointed out, smirking wider when she saw Draco’s eyes dimming with pain and realization.



Blinking away the emotions in the silver pools, he snarled and grabbed a fistful of her robes, hoisting her up threateningly in the air until her feet dangled above the grass. “Y—You’re lying! You deceitful little whore!” He cursed out loud, oblivious to the growing cheers and the stirrings of the gathering students in the Quidditch pitch as Madam Hooch began to signal the start of the match.

Elisa shook her head fiercely, meeting his gaze head on with a firm glare. “I’m not! If you don’t believe me, you can ask your grandfather yourself! Or maybe Anton! I showed him the check a couple of days ago and he immediately took it from me. In fact, I wouldn’t be surprised if he was in on the whole thing too! Maybe he and Potter are conspiring against you for the money—”

“SHUT UP! I DON’T BELIEVE YOU!” Draco instantly exploded at the mention of Anton’s name, his voice rising to dangerous levels and he would have managed to hit her had Goyle not reached forward and caught his fist before it collided with Elisa’s cheek.

“Draco, don’t! She’s a woman! Besides, she doesn’t have anything on her to convince us of what she’s saying! I personally don’t think Potter would ever be capable of doing any of this!” He told him, attempting to calm the other Slytherin down and at his words; Draco seemed to recover his senses, nodding weakly in agreement.

Cowering away at the Malfoy heir’s open display of anger, Elisa managed to wrench herself free from his grasp and took several steps away from him. Before she could walk away, Draco looked up and spoke again – his voice sounding more restrained and controlled.

“You don’t even have any proof of what you’re accusing my fiancé of, Cartwright. I should file a lawsuit against you right now.” He managed to stay, surprising himself when his voice had come out steady despite the overwhelming anger that were surging into him.

In his entire life, he had never experienced the turbulent mixture of emotions he was feeling right now. He felt angry, betrayed, foolish, scared and heartbroken all at once. The searing pain in his chest weakened him, making it extremely difficult for him to breathe or think straight.

Taking another deep, shaky breath, Draco barely heard his teammates shouting angrily for him to get out onto the Quidditch field for the match. His mind was being flooded with different images and observations he had made in the past couple of weeks – all of which were infusing themselves as supporting evidence for Elisa's accusations.

He recalled the familiar nod with which his grandfather had greeted Harry with the afternoon he had introduced her to him, along with the rest of the family. At the time, his grandfather had said something along the lines of 'having seen her face once before' but neither Harry nor Lawrence had explained further what he had meant.

In fact, Draco distinctly remembered that they had been avoiding his eyes.

Biting his lip in agitation, his thoughts were filled with another disturbing realization – that of Pansy and Daphne's words just thirty minutes ago when they had told him that they had seen Anton talking intimately to Harry a couple of days ago and Anton had 'handed' Harry something.

No...No, it couldn't be. I'm exaggerating things... Harry would never! She'd never do that to me! Draco thought desperately in his head, oblivious to the growing sneer on Elisa's face in front of him when she saw the turmoil on his features.

But then again...Why was she so against marrying you and bearing you a child? Remember the fight you had last week? She said she hadn't thought about the implications of marrying you, didn't she? A harsh, mocking voice drawled inside his head and Draco felt another painful ache in his chest, shaking his head furiously to block the voice off.

"No...I don't believe any of it!" Draco blurted out more to himself than anyone else, earning himself a worried glance from both Crabbe and Goyle beside him.

"Draco, the match is going to start. You'd better get out there—"

Draco shook his head more fiercely this time, straining desperately to block out the barrage of thoughts that were echoing in his head. He felt like punching the nearest wall and ramming the end of his Firebolt against Elisa's smirking face but he thought against it, clenching his hands tightly instead.

Think about it! If Grandfather had paid her to marry you, she must still find you as repulsive as ever! She got drunk at your engagement party didn't she?! She won't bear you a child! She's trying to postpone marriage as much as possible. Did you really think everything was PERFECT? She HATES you, Draco! The voice drawled louder, laughing harshly inside his head again and again until Draco finally slammed his fist against the wall to silence it, ignoring the blast of pain that came with the collision.

"SHUT THE FUCK UP!"

Elisa jumped when Draco seemed just about ready to explode, his face seething red and his eyes blazing with a kind of anger that she had never seen before. Crabbe and Goyle both stepped back from the Quidditch Captain, warily eyeing his movements.

When he snapped his glare to Elisa once more, she yelped at the sight of the deadly murder in his eyes that warned her to watch her next words. He sneered at her, his face carefully guarded and his entire body radiating a horrifying aura of pent-up rage as he reshoouldered his Firebolt.

"I don't believe you, Cartwright. You have ten seconds to get out of my sight before I forget I'm a gentleman and hit you." He warned in a low, snake-like whisper. His soft voice was infused with so much fury that it terrified Elisa so much more than if he had shouted at her.

Crabbe and Goyle resumed their grips on Elisa's arms, slowly escorting her back to the castle. "Come on, Cartwright...I wouldn't upset Draco any further. Frankly, I've never seen him this angry..." Crabbe warned in a low voice to her ear.

Just as Elisa was going to follow him, they all heard a roaring applause coming from the Quidditch pitch followed by Seamus Finnegan excitedly shouting off the names of the Gryffindor team members one by one – all of which were met with their own cheers and catcalls.

“Introducing... the greatest Quidditch team of all time! The Gryffindors! WOOT! A beautiful line-up, ladies and gents! Chasers: Ginny Weasley, Frankie Johansen, Jordan Corwin!”

“Captain! Damn it, Malfoy! We’re going out there in 2 minutes! Get your arse over here now!” A blissfully oblivious Theodore Nott called out to them from the Slytherin locker rooms, successfully rousing Draco out of his self-induced rage.

“...Beaters: Jeff Cromwell and Hans McDougal!”

As Elisa finally allowed herself to be dragged off by Crabbe and Goyle and Draco turned sharply to enter the locker rooms, she called out again, her smirk unseen by the blonde Slytherin.

“And if I am right about your ‘perfect’ fiancé, Draco...?”

Draco froze and sneered callously to himself, his grip on his Firebolt tightening until his knuckles turned into a ghastly white. He didn’t bother turning around as he answered her, shaking his head fiercely in stubborn denial.

“...Keeper: Ron Weasley!”

“If you’re right and I’m wrong, Elisa...Then I’ll eat my words, accept your father’s offer and marry you.” He scoffed at the very idea of his own words, oblivious to the triumphant smirk that had graced Elisa’s beautiful features and the cringe on both Crabbe and Goyle’s faces.

“I’ll hold you to that, darling...”

Draco never heard those last words as he raced towards the locker rooms to start the match.

“...and Gryffindor Quidditch Captain and Seeker: Jaimee Potter!”

“...And now, give it up for those blasted cheating thugs—I mean—slugs! Er—Haha! I mean Snakes! I said SNAKES! The Slytherins!” Seamus purposely slipped up in an exaggeratedly bored tone of voice that brought about a few laughs from the Gryffindor side of the stands. The green-and-silver decked audience booed loudly at his biased announcing, causing the Irish Gryffindor to laugh to himself in good humor.

“Cheating but hot, good-looking bunch of blokes, of course!” He soon corrected himself, finally earning a couple of loud cheers and laughter from the Slytherin side of the stands.

“Presenting an all-male – HOT, if I do say so myself – line-up of – Chasers: Malcolm Pellerin, Theodore Nott and Patrick Cleaver! Beaters: Andrew Winchcombe and Michael Morgan! Keeper: Blaise Zabini, and Slytherin Team Captain and Seeker: Draco Malfoy!”

Jaimee felt her heart jump right up into her throat as the Slytherin team members all piled out of the locker rooms and flew out onto the pitch one by one when their names were called, circling the pitch once before resuming their position on their side of the field.

Draco was the last one who flew up into the air and as soon as she caught sight of her fiancé’s well-missed, familiar frame, she felt a warm sensation prickling at the back of neck. At the Head Boy’s arrival, most of the younger Slytherin girls watching squealed and giggled loudly in excitement, unknowingly earning themselves a glare from one very pissed off Gryffindor captain.

The irritation on her face soon disappeared, however, as soon as she caught sight of the horrifying blaze of anger in Draco’s normally composed features. His eyes were dark with fury and as he circled the pitch once and passed her, Harry felt her heart drop when she noticed that not once had Draco bothered to smile or even glance at her direction.

Damn it, Draco! Are you still mad at me...? She asked him silently with her eyes as he passed her but again he ignored her, flying

around her like she was some inanimate object. He gestured impatiently for his teammates to huddle around him in a tight circle, his jaw still clenched tightly in barely contained anger.

Oh grow up, Malfoy! Harry thought irritably as she felt her own anger growing at Draco's behavior. She had thought that after giving each other an entire week to mellow both their explosive tempers out, they would be able to talk more rationally.

With her fiancé's uncalled-for behavior now, however, she had obviously given him more credit than he deserved.

As soon as she pieced together Draco's tense shoulders, seething red features and the harsh sneer on his face, Harry immediately turned to Ron beside her and bit her lip in anxiety. "Something's wrong, Ron...Draco's...pissed." She began uncertainly and Ron snorted, raising a single eyebrow at her.

"What else is new?" He responded lightly but Harry shook her head frantically, turning her attention back to Draco and panicking further when she saw the horrible, malevolent sneer he was throwing at the Gryffindors as he talked with his teammates.

The Head Boy looked exactly like he did three years ago back when he and Harry were still trying to upstage and humiliate each other every chance they got. In fact, if Harry didn't know any better, she could have sworn that Draco seemed to have reverted back to his horrible childhood self.

"I'm serious, Ron! He's angry. VERY ANGRY. That can't be good for this match." She murmured under her breath, watching as Draco seemed to smirk in agreement with Morgan over something before peering at the Gryffindor team again with a devious gleam in his eyes.

"Aw come on, why are you so worried, Harry—"

Ron instantly cut himself off when a stray bludger came flying right over his head and socked Jeff right in his left shoulder, nearly causing the Gryffindor beater to fall to the grass had Harry had not flown over to him and steadied him back on his broom.

Paling in shock and looking up in the direction the bludger had come from, her eyes narrowed when saw the Slytherin team cracking up with laughter a couple of yards away. Draco held the beater club in his hand and waved it mockingly at her with another sneer, obviously indicating that the stray bludger had been his doing.

“What’s his problem?! Why is he taunting us?!” Ron demanded angrily, nearly grabbing Hans’ beater club to hit a bludger back at the Slytherins but Harry shook her head and yanked the club out of his hands, handing it back to Hans before anything else happened.

“Don’t give them the satisfaction, Ron. We’re above their level.” She muttered firmly, her hands slowly tightening into angry fists. Glaring back at her angry, sneering fiancé, Jaimee failed to hide the sad look of disappointment showing in her green eyes.

The game hasn’t even started yet you childish, cheating prick! Don’t take our issues out on my teammates! Take them out on me! Harry wanted to scream at him but she held her words back, not wanting to cause any more friction between the two of them.

Instead, she turned back to pay close attention as Madam Hooch began formally signaling the start of the match. “Captains! Over here now!” She called out loud, gesturing for both Harry and Draco to fly over to the center of the pitch. Checking one last time to make sure Jeff was okay, Jaimee flew her Firebolt over to the white-haired woman.

Once she got there, she tried to return the vicious glare Draco was sending her from a couple of inches away, Madam Hooch spoke up again, oblivious to the way both captains were glaring fierce daggers into each other’s eyes as though they were ready to murder one another right then and there.

“Alright. Captains, shake hands.”

Harry had to bite back a gasp of pain when Draco seemed to purposely crush her slender hand with his stronger, much larger one, squeezing her fingers in an angry, bone-crunching grip. Just as she

was ready to pull back to save the remaining bones she had left, Draco yanked her forward until their faces were inches apart, leaning forward to hiss something in her ear.

“You have a lot of explaining to do, Potter.”

Just as Harry had suspected, Draco sounded furious –the most furious she had ever seen and heard him. However, the way he had spoken to her inflamed her own anger and she yanked her hand back, leveling him with a glare that easily matched his own.

“Fuck off, Malfoy.”

Draco’s eyes blazed even more at this but he didn’t get to say anything as Madam Hooch blew her whistle again, holding up a Quaffle in her hand. “Captains! First one to reach the Quaffle goes first! At the ready – One! Two! Three – ” She tossed the large ball up in the air, inciting loud cheering and catcalls from the spectators around them.

Harry had tried reaching up for the Quaffle but instantly yelped out in surprised pain when Draco had used a single hand and shoved her roughly away. They both heard the Gryffindor side of the stands booing and hissing loudly when Draco easily caught the Quaffle with his other hand, tossing it up and down tauntingly in the air.

“Wow! It looks like we have a bit of a lover’s quarrel going on here between our two captains, folks! Malfoy and Potter seem to be taking this thing a little too seriously if you know what I mean!” Seamus’ chuckling voice rang out onto the stands but Harry never heard him, her own eyes now blazing with an anger that matched Draco’s. He smirked at her before flying back towards his teammates toward the other side of the pitch.

NO GOOD, CHEATING BASTARD! I’LL SHOW HIM! She felt an inexplicable fury erupting in her chest, her hands tightening dangerously around her broom. She found herself wishing she could do the same thing with her sneering fiancé’s neck.



As she flew back towards the Gryffindor goal posts, she heard Madam Hooch blowing her whistle and shouting loudly behind her – her words soon drowned out about a second later as the stands of onlookers around them erupted in a thundering chorus of cheering, applause and catcalling.

“SLYTHERINS ON THE OFFENSE FIRST! YOU MAY BEGIN!”

“And we’re off ladies and gentlemen! Here we are at the FINAL Quidditch match of this school year! Oh how I will miss this job...I never get any other excuse to stare at so many blokes all at once! I’m KIDDING, Dean! Keep your eye on the ball will you?!”

Watching from the Slytherin side of the stands next to Isabella, Hermione laughed to herself as she watched Dean Thomas nearly ram himself into the stands when he heard his so-called boyfriend’s snarky comments. Theodore Nott crashed into him from behind, successfully managing to wrench the Quaffle right out of the Gryffindor’s grasp.

“There! Now see what you’ve done, Dean! Stop glaring at me and play Quidditch! And Ginny Weasley steals the Quaffle! There she goes ladies and gentlemen! Getting close! Getting close...AND....AW! A BRILLIANT save by that hot keeper Blaise Zabini!”

Once he had tossed the Quaffle to Malcolm Pellerin, Blaise looked up at this and flashed Seamus a very rude finger, causing the Irish Gryffindor to grin widely and wink back in return.

“Aw...Zabini! That’s not very nice! And Pellerin takes the Quaffle...Flies over to the Gryffindor side! Can he get in it, ladies and gents? He shoots! He...OH! And ANOTHER brilliant save by Gryffindor keeper, Ron Weasley! It helps when you’re inspired, huh Ron?”

Ron ignored this and tossed the Quaffle back to Frankie, who flew a couple of yards and tossed it back to Ginny several yards away. Inspecting her surroundings, Ginny narrowly avoided a bludger sent her way and began heading for the goal posts.

“And Ginny’s going for it! Whoops! Swerves around Potter there for a second. Excellent defensive beater-ing – is there such a word? Excellent beater DEFENSE by the Gryffindor team! You go Lions!”

From the end of the field, Draco sneered widely and signaled to both Nott and Patrick Cleaver with a set of hand gestures. Both boys returned this with a smirk of their own and they instantly flew off after Ginny Weasley, Nott flying at her left and Cleaver at her right. Then, waiting for the other’s signal, they cackled loudly before they crashed painfully into her from both sides, causing Ginny to scream in surprise when she was forced to spiral her broom out of control.

Another loud chorus of boos and angry yelling could be heard from the crowd of red and gold spectators seated at the stands.

“Oh good Merlin! It’s the dreaded Slytherin Sandwich Smash! Ginny is spiraling out of control! Someone save her before—”

Harry was already speeding off after the red-haired girl but before she managed to reach her in time, Ginny had already crashed into one of the nearby stands of Gryffindor supporters. She screamed just as she felt her body slam right into a hard, lean figure and looking up, she was instantly met with a set of blue eyes that matched the surprise of her own.

“GINNY! Are you okay?!” Harry cried out after her from several feet away but Ginny barely heard her, blushing profusely as she suddenly realized that she had landed herself right in the lap of a very familiar, smirking blonde.

“I—I’m sorry! I—I...” Unsure of how to react and what to say, she looked up and blinked back at the handsome – albeit stunned – features of Anton Malfoy. For a couple of awkward moments, he seemed to stare at her in amused incredulity – oblivious to the smirk on Lorraine’s face beside him.

His lips finally settled into a decidedly amused smirk and he raised an eyebrow at Ginny’s embarrassed face, causing her cheeks to flame up even more in utter humiliation when she heard his next words.

"If I had known that watching Quidditch lands me with an adorable redhead on my lap, I would have ended up watching it more often..." He teased lightly, causing Ginny to laugh nervously at the definite flirtatious tone in his voice.

"Th—That is... I'm sorry I landed on you. I—"

"GINNY! Are you hurt?!"

The voice that had broken Anton's gaze on her had been Ron's this time and at this, Ginny finally tore her gaze away from the blonde's sapphire blue eyes and looked up to find both Harry and Ron giving her incredulous stares back up at the pitch.

"Well hurry up! Get back in the air!" Ron snapped impatiently to the female Weasley and she nodded in embarrassment, turning back to flash Anton an apologetic grimace.

"Sorry about that, Malfoy...It was an accident." She managed to mutter under her breath, grabbing her broom and flying right back into the air. Just as she managed to fly up several inches, Anton spoke up again – redirecting her attention to the easy smile on his face.

"Maybe next time it won't have to be an accident, Weasley..." He drawled teasingly, causing Ginny to reward him with an equally flirtatious, quirky grin before she sped right back up into the match, fully aware of the half-veela's lingering gaze on her form.

"And she's alright everyone! Thank Merlin! Take THAT, cheating thugs! Uh-oh, Ron! Block that shot! BLOCK THAT SHOT, I SAY! Uh-OH—NOOOOO!"

Seamus – as well as all the other Gryffindor fans – groaned loudly as Nott had managed to slip the Quaffle right through Ron's defense, earning the Slytherin team ten points for their efforts. The Slytherin supporters cheered and whistled loudly, making faces at the Gryffindor supporters glaring at them.

“And the Slytherins score...Uh-oh! Johansen with the Quaffle! Long pass over there to Dean Thomas – who is mine by the way! And he passes back to Johansen and – YOU NO GOOD CHEATING BLASTED SCUMBAG! THAT WAS A FOUL! I OUGHT TO—”

Harry never heard the rest of Seamus’ furious cursing as she was too busy watching in utter dismay how Michael Morgan had purposely rammed himself into Frankie’s smaller frame. The Gryffindor Chaser squeaked in pain as she teetered dangerously on her broom, the Quaffle falling from her hands to be caught by a smirking Cleaver as he passed her.

Furious, Harry turned around just in time to see Draco on the other side of the pitch giving his teammates another smirk and nod. Feeling her eyes on him, Draco looked directly at her and taunted her further by raising his eyebrow – to which Harry would have sped at him and rammed her fist against his jaw had Dean not called out to her from behind.

“Harry! They’re using more cheating tactics than usual! I don’t know what it is you did that’s got Malfoy so mad but they’re beating the crap out of us!” He rushed out hastily as he zoomed past her, narrowly avoiding the two bludgers aimed right at his head.

Madam Hooch blew her whistle sharply before Harry could respond, gesturing to Draco and signaling for his team to hand her the Quaffle on account of a violation. Rolling his eyes, Draco grabbed the Quaffle from Cleaver and tossed it to the official before flying back to whisper something to his teammates once more.

“Potter! Your call!” Madam Hooch called out to her, handing her the Quaffle and whistling loudly once more to resume the match. After having tossed the ball to Ginny, Harry flew around the pitch until she was within talking range of her fiancé and she angrily shoved at him, forcing him to look at her in surprise.

“Draco, what is your problem?! We haven’t seen each other for a week and this is how you suddenly act around me?! Look, I understand if you’re mad at me or something but—” Draco cut her off

instantly but shoving her back, causing her to cry out in surprise when the force of his shove had nearly knocked her off her broom.

He sneered at her, his eyes narrowed in fuming rage. "My problem?! YOU'RE my problem! What ever happened to HONESTY in a relationship, huh?! Apparently, there are a lot of things you haven't been telling me about!" He snapped at her, causing a look of guilt to cross her face.

Thinking he was talking about her Unspeakable invitation, Jaimee shook her head fiercely and tried to give him an imploring look. "Look, you have nothing to worry about alright?! It's not like that! I—"

"Get out of my face, Potter!"

She gasped when he shoved past her and flew off, leaving her gaping after him in speechless stupor. She was just about to chase after him when she heard another round of loud cursing and booing from the stands and looking up, she managed to see Morgan and Cleaver giving each other a high five just as they hovered over Jordan's bruised form.

Her housemate was sporting a battered eye and seeing this was the final straw for Harry altogether. Steeling her nerves, she signaled to Madam Hooch for a quick time out. When the white-haired woman nodded, the rest of the Gryffindors huddled around her in a tight circle, listening intently to her instructions.

"Alright...Change of strategy. Chasers! Focus on the Quaffle alone. Beaters! Keep your eyes on ALL the Slytherins and as much as possible, send as many bludgers as you can towards Draco. He's the one giving out all the commands for the rough-housing so shut him up! Ron, steady? Alright? GO!" She finished and at their nods, she gestured for them to return to their positions.

Once the match had restarted and the Gryffindors implemented their new strategy, they seemed to fare off relatively better than they've been doing in the first half. By the end of another full thirty minutes, the score was 60-40 in favor of Slytherin but with Draco incapable of

doing anything but dodging bludgers every minute, the Gryffindors were catching up fast.

The Malfoy heir winced when a bludger zoomed dangerously past his ear and he whirled around, his eyes searching frantically around the pitch for the golden snitch. By now, Jaimee was hovering near the far end of the pitch and he sped off after her, convinced that following her would probably get him to the snitch faster than his own distracted efforts.

“And ANOTHER ten points to Gryffindor! Go team! Go! Dean, you are looking gorgeous, babe! Isn’t he, folks? Oh and nice bludger shot there by Jordan! Malfoy avoids it once again. DAMN! That Draco Malfoy is just pure sex incarnate huh? I’m KIDDING, Dean! I’m KIDDING! Watch the Quaffle!”

“Snitch...Snitch...Find the snitch...End this bloodbath.” Harry chanted desperately to herself as her eyes roamed for the brief glint of gold she had barely glimpsed a couple of minutes ago. She was so caught up in her search that she failed to notice Draco flying right up behind her until he spoke up loudly and caused her to jump in alarm.

“Alright there, scarhead?!” He drawled mockingly, the familiar taunt since their second year igniting Harry’s temper once again. She snapped her head back and glared at him, her eyes narrowing dangerously when she was met with his spiteful smirk.

Several yards away, they heard the crowds cheering loudly – indicating that Slytherin had gotten another goal in. Unfortunately, neither seeker heard it, both of them busy with attempting to murder one another using the deadly gleam in their eyes.

In spite of herself, Jaimee’s anger got the better of her and she snarled at him again, her words dripping with disdain. “You know, I had almost forgotten you existed this week! It’s such a shame, really. Why don’t you go back to Italy and STAY THERE?” She mocked sarcastically, bringing a similar growl to Draco’s lips.

“Oh yeah?! Well I was having a blast pretending that I wasn’t engaged to some attention-grabbing, identity-confused fake woman

who still insists on acting like a man!” He retorted easily and his malicious laughter made Harry’s vision flash a dangerous red.

She flew right up to him until their faces were barely inches apart. Neither of them paid any more attention to the proceedings of the game as they were suddenly more than content on hurling as many insults as they possibly could at one another in the shortest amount of time.

“At least when I was a man, I knew my way around the sheets! I almost feel sorry for all your past girlfriends, Malfoy! Did they know before they dated you that you sucked THAT MUCH in bed?!” She shouted loud enough for several of their teammates to hear and at this, Jordan and Dean both cracked up – unfortunately causing them to nearly get smashed by a bludger.

Draco’s face had flushed a seething red with a mixture of anger and humiliation.

He met her sneering face head on with a fierce snarl of his own. “I didn’t hear you complaining while I was screwing the hell out of you! In fact, you were BEGGING me for it! If I ‘sucked’, then explain to me WHY I had you SCREAMING and MOANING my name until your bloody throat was SORE!” He shouted back in equal volume, this time reversing their situations such that Jaimee’s cheeks had flushed a deep humiliated pink.

It had been Ron’s poor ears that had heard this one and the redhead had nearly flown himself right into the Gryffindor goal post in horror, his face paling at the disturbing image that suddenly plagued his mind of his best friend being screwed again and again by his worst enemy.

At this point, Harry was already shaking her head at her own behavior, her anger fading into a sad resignation when she realized just how stupid they were both acting towards each other. Giving Draco a look of disappointment, she slowly turned around and forced herself to fly away, ignoring his loud, indignant shouts behind her.

“Where are you going, Potter?! I’m not finished with you yet!” Draco hurled out at her in resentment, his eyes still blazing from her last

comment about his bedroom skills but Harry was already flying away, ignoring his angry protests.

“Well I’m done with you, Draco...This is ridiculous.” She responded quietly, zooming right past him and ignoring the daggers of his eyes.

Furious at her dismissal of him, the Head Boy was just about to fly back to his teammates when a flash of sudden movement caught his gaze. Narrowing his eyes, he spun his head around just in time to see Harry diving downward in hot pursuit of the golden snitch just a couple of yards away from where Draco was standing.

“Not this time, Potter.” He growled under his breath as he tore off after her, maneuvering his Firebolt so that he aimed himself right at her side. He was oblivious to the loud chorus of excited cheering from the spectators as he sneered and turned sharply to his side, slamming his shoulder right into Jaimee’s and forcing her to veer slightly off course.

“Ugh! Malfoy, you bastard!” She cursed angrily at him and returned the gesture easily, steering her own Firebolt and crashing herself sideways against him as they sped closely after the fluttering golden snitch flying several feet away from them.

The action seemed to hurt her more than it did him, however, and she winced in pain, clutching her sore shoulder. Draco saw this out of the corner of his eye and laughed loudly, picking up speed as the snitch forced them both to swerve dangerously around the side of the Quidditch pitch.

“You’re a girl, Potter! You’re not strong enough to physical attack me anymore! Your body is delicate and frail and – ”

“I’LL SHOW YOU DELICATE, MALFOY!”

As they both sped up in pursuit after the snitch – Harry rammed her shoulder right into Draco’s side. This time, however, the surprising strength of the collision had caused the Slytherin to grunt in pain as he was forced to steer his broom away before he collided with one of the goal posts.



“DAMN IT!”

Draco froze in mid-air and was about to turn around to fly right back after her but within a couple of seconds, Harry was already making her signature dive towards the snitch, increasing the screaming from the Gryffindor side of the stands.

“...AND POTTER’S DIVING FOR THE SNITCH! IT’S NECK AND NECK, LADIES AND GENTS! 90-80 SLYTHERIN! WILL SHE GET IT?! WILL SHE GET IT?!”

Growling and flushing in humiliation, Draco dived down after her, reaching a single hand forward and grasping Jaimee by her Gryffindor robes to slow her down. She gasped at the underhanded tactic but continued her descent, her small hand already closing in on the winged, miniscule golden ball.

“GOOD MERLIN! MALFOY’S GOT HER BY HER ROBES! SHE’S ALMOST THERE! ALMOST! ALMOST! WILL SHE—”

Jaimee winced as she heard a distinct ripping sound as Draco yanked her robes backwards, trying to keep her from the snitch. Reaching out for it desperately, she had just heard her own teammates nearby cheering her on when she finally grinned and closed her hand around the small, golden ball – its wings fluttering helplessly against her fingers.

“I DON’T BELIEVE IT! SHE’S GOT IT! POTTER’S GOT THE SNITCH! GRYFFINDOR WINS – 240 to 80! WOOOOOOHOOOOO! GRYFFINDOR WINS THE QUIDDITCH CUP, BABY! WOOOOOOOT! WE WOOOOOOON!”

“Gargh!”

Harry clenched her eyes shut in anticipation of pain as she promptly stumbled right off her room and her back crashed onto the rocky ground of the Quidditch pitch below. She had barely registered what had happened when she heard another loud crash before Draco

collapsed right on top of her, his face recoiling in slight pain from the harsh impact.

“GRY-FIND-DOR! GRY-FIN-DOR! GRY-FIND-DOR!”

Up at the top stands, Seamus had thrown the scorecards in his hand right up into the air and jumped up on his seat, screaming and cheering loudly at the top of his lungs. Ron, Dean and the rest of the Quidditch team were already zooming into the middle of the field, meeting each other halfway in loud hugs, infectious smiles and laughter.

Hermione was rushing down from the stands along with the rest of the Gryffindor seventh years and all of them were flushed with elation, throwing their arms around each individual member of the Gryffindor Quidditch team in excitement.

Walking from the teacher's stands, a grinning Dumbledore carefully made his way towards the Gryffindor side of the stands with a gleaming championship trophy balanced in his hand. Professor McGonagall was smiling and clapping tearfully behind him.

All of this seemed to be happening all at once yet Harry chose to remain exactly where she was lying on the grass – trapped underneath Draco's lean frame and completely motionless, the golden snitch caged tightly in her closed fist. Staring right up into his eyes, her anger began to dissolve into fond amusement and she smiled up at him, raising her free hand to stroke his cheek.

It took Draco several moments to compose himself after having realized they lost the match but when he saw the teasing sparkle in her eyes, the corner of his lips quirked slightly into a weak, reluctant smile.

They stared into each other's eyes for a long time, reacquainting themselves with the other's features. Then – just as the stands around them were drowned in a sea of Gryffindors and from the air poured a steam of red and gold confetti – Harry leaned forward and pressed her lips against Draco's in a sweet kiss, releasing the snitch so she could wrap her arms around his neck.

“Oy, Harry! Come on! Everyone’s waiting in the Common Room for us! They’re throwing a huge celebration party, I don’t want to miss it! It’s our last one!” Ron complained loudly as he trotted back inside the Gryffindor locker rooms, his voice echoing along the empty shower stalls.

Jaimee laughed and peered around her locker to roll her eyes at her best friend’s growing impatience. Ignoring his protests, she reached behind her neck and yanked her hair tie off, letting her long strands of black hair cascade freely down past her shoulders.

“Relax, Ron! Merlin’s beard...We’ve got the entire night to celebrate! Why are you in such a hurry? I think I’m going to take my own sweet time in the shower for a bit so go on ahead without me.” She nodded to him, giving him another grin of acknowledgment.

Ron raised an eyebrow at her, looking at his watch again before sighing and offering her a helpless smile. “Are you sure you don’t want me to wait for you? I told Lorraine I’d be out in fifteen but she’s probably with Hermione right now so—”

Harry rolled her eyes and hurled her sweat-damp uniform right at him, causing Ron to make a face of disgust when it missed him by several inches. “Go on! Get out of here! I’ll catch up to you guys in a bit! I’m going to enjoy myself a nice, cold shower.” She told him, laughing when he rolled her eyes at her increasing feminine tendencies.

“I swear, you become more and more of a woman every day. Next, you’ll be getting manicures with Hermione! Ugh...Alright, I’ll see you back at the common room then. I’ll save you some Butterbeers.” He told her, giving her one last grin and wave before he ran off, closing the door quietly behind him.

Once he was gone, Jaimee looked around the locker room – making sure it was completely empty before she bent down and began untying her sneakers. Humming softly to herself, she glanced briefly at her reflection in her locker mirror, smiling when saw the definite flush on her normally pale cheeks. Grabbing a white towel, she

slipped off the rest of her clothing – shoving them into her locker – before stepping into a nearby shower stall.

Draco doesn't seem mad about Slytherin losing...I wonder what got him so riled up like that at the beginning of the match... Harry thought idly to herself as she switched on the shower. She closed her eyes when she felt the cool water rushing along her warm skin, sighing in utter contentment.

Hmm...I wonder if I should tell him about the Unspeakable thing. He doesn't seem to be mad anymore...Though I can't exactly be sure unless I talk to him. She opened her eyes and began scrubbing some soap onto herself, her thoughts plagued with her fiancé and his recent actions.

Then – recalling the things he had done and said to her during the match – she felt another rush of anger surging into her throat. Draco can be such an asshole...I wonder if he even knows that I gave up Ashford's invitation because of him and his stupid traditions. She fumed silently as she began to shampoo her hair, closing her eyes under the pouring water.

Just as she had washed the bubbles out of her hair and was about to turn the shower right off, she heard the shower stall's entrance slide open loudly behind her and she whirled around in panic, ready to scream and curse angrily at the pervert who had dared to peek at her.

"You sick peeping pervert, I'm going to blow your eyes up to the size of balloons—"

She was immediately silenced when she felt a pair of warm, insistent lips claiming her own right before she was shoved forcefully backwards into the stall's white tiled walls. Grunting in pain at the collision, she had just enough time to recognize the look of pure animalistic lust in a familiar pair of silver orbs before Draco's lips were on hers again and he pressed her firmly against the wall, his hands reaching down and grabbing her arse.

**\*RATED SCENE DELETED\***

Once Draco had apologized and emptied himself completely in her, he felt utterly exhausted and he closed his eyes, his hands slowly releasing her legs and carefully setting her back down onto the floor. As soon as she was back on her own feet, she wrapped her arms around him and pulled him against her in a tight, passionate embrace, her lips lingering on his cheek.

Draco trembled in her arms, all his anger gone and in its place, an overwhelming sense of need and love for her that reverberated in every core of his being. In fact, for the first time in his life, he felt wonderfully and completely refreshed and at peace.

Realizing that she must have taken in all his anger into herself, he felt his heart constrict in raw tenderness and held her tighter against him, closing his eyes and savoring the feeling of her steady heartbeat against his own chest.

They stayed in that position for a long moment, allowing the cold water flowing from the open shower to wash away the remnants of sweat from their flushed bodies. When Draco had found his voice, he forced himself to speak – his voice no longer dripping with anger but was now tinged with a light tone of humor and affection.

“I realize I suck horribly at all this love stuff, Potter...But at sex, I am a god. I can’t believe you insulted my bedroom skills awhile ago.” He tried to scowl at her but ended up laughing weakly when Harry immediately stuck her tongue out at him in response.

“You were being a stuck-up prick! I had to take you down a little. Besides, I was a little angry. You kept cheating and hurting my teammates.” She admitted, reaching over and beginning to lather some shampoo into his hair.

Draco smiled at this, his dimple visible as he bent down slightly so she could wash his hair, his hand caressing the smooth skin of her back. “What does it matter? You guys still won anyway. Ugh. And to think for once I was hoping for a Slytherin victory this year.” He complained loudly but instead of answering him, she shoved him directly under the shower to rinse out his hair.

“Hey—”

“Keep dreaming, Malfoy.” Harry snorted derisively, ignoring Draco’s glare as she reached over for a bar of soap and handed it to him. Draco raised an eyebrow and gave her an expectant smirk, causing the Gryffindor to blush slightly in embarrassment.

“You soap yourself...I can’t do that for you.” She murmured under her breath, her cheeks tinted with a rather lovely shade of pink that Draco couldn’t prevent himself from teasing her further.

“Why not? I thought Harry Potter ‘knew his way around the bedroom’.” He drawled pointedly, quoting her exact words and leaning back to enjoy the sound of her laughter as she answered him.

“Ah...But we’re in the shower.”

Draco couldn’t prevent a laugh at her quirky grin and finally relented, taking the soap from her hand and proceeding to clean himself under the shower’s water. Embarrassed, Harry hastily tore her eyes away from his lean physique as he rinsed himself under the water and settled on staring at the wall instead, biting her lip in awkward silence

Fortunately, she was saved from the need to say anything when Draco spoke up for her, forcing her to look up and meet his gaze. “By the way...I’ve...Well, I’ve thought about what you said.” He began uncertainly, reaching toward her and pulling her under the shower with him.

Gasping softly at the blast of cold on her flushed skin, she nodded and waited for him to continue. Draco sighed and raised a hand up to stroke her cheek, giving her a small smile. “We...We don’t have to have children right away if you’re not comfortable with the idea yet. I...I understand I was being a bit unreasonable with you.” He told her softly, watching as her green eyes seemed to glow in happiness at his words.

“Thank you, Draco...That means a lot to me.”

He smirked and bent down towards his drenched, discarded Quidditch robes on the shower floor, easing his wand out of the pockets. "Yeah so you might want to cast those charms on yourself before I change my mind and purposely 'forget' to remind you that fifteen minutes have almost elapsed." He told her, chuckling when Harry flushed in panic and snatched his wand out of his hands.

Waving it several times over herself, she relaxed and finally reached up to shut the shower off before handing him back his wand. She wrapped her towel around herself and exited the stall first, reaching into her locker and pulling out an extra towel for him.

He accepted this with a grateful nod and tied it securely around his waist, stepping out of the stall to walk up to her and wrap his arms securely around her from behind. Leaning down to whisper something into her ear, a small smirk played on his lips as he spoke.

"Mmm...Now that nobody's here, don't you think you owe me a rematch? I 'let' you beat me you know. I could have won if I had really wanted to—"

Harry scoffed loudly, flinging his arms off of her and giving him an indignant glare. "You did not! You got your arse kicked, Malfoy! Just like I said you would. Admit it, Draco. I rule over you in the Quidditch field." She boasted with a wide playful grin but Draco easily met it with a suggestive leer, his hand snaking back around her waist and yanking her back against his firm body.

"That's quite alright, Potter. I rule over you in the bedroom anyway." He retorted easily in a low, nonchalant drawl, successfully bringing a heated flush of desire to her cheeks. Coughing loudly, she bit her lip and looked away from him, trying to hide her embarrassed face.

He smirked at her reaction before he finally released her, turning and walking over to the bag he had discarded impatiently near the entrance of the locker room. He had been so caught up in his lust awhile ago that he had flung his bag onto the floor before he had rushed into the shower after her.

When she realized that she was watching him put on his clothes, Harry flushed even darker and hastily turned around, making her back to her locker. "I'm going to go change in one of those changing stalls over there. And no, you're not going in there with me." She warned him when Draco had smirked and looked as though he was going to make another suggestive comment.

He continued anyway, his mirth-filled eyes following her as she walked to the nearby changing stalls carrying her clothes. "You're such a girl, Potter. I've seen every single part of you – hell, I've tasted every single part of you. Why are you being so modest?" He drawled loudly but Harry shook her head fiercely and pulled the curtain closed around her stall.

"Because I am not used to seeing my own body until now – much less having other people see it – and you are a perverted, sex-starved freak." She retorted derisively and at that, Draco chuckled and shook his head.

Once he had finished dressing up and tossing his school robes over himself, he walked over to the mirror in her locker to fix his hair, his eyes immediately drawn to Harry's open schoolbag inside. "Potter, you left your bag open. Do you want me to close it for you before any of your lingerie spills out?" He teased, earning himself a towel to the face which she had tossed over the curtain at him.

"Hmm. Your towel smells like you, it's turning me on." He finally laughed when Harry let out an exasperated sigh of frustration. "Just close the damn bag, will you? Ugh. I'm beginning to realize why girls think guys have a one-track mind." He heard her muttering loudly to herself as he reached over to close her bag.

Just as he was tugging on the zipper, he cursed when he accidentally pulled too hard, causing the bag to fall from the locker and spill out onto the floor. Wincing and checking to make sure Harry was still busy getting dressed, Draco hurriedly bent and began to put the contents back in. As he was reaching for her quills, an open pocket caught his eye. Curious, he reached a hand in and opened the small pouch, pulling out all three of its contents.



As soon as he realized what he was staring at, he immediately felt all the blood rush out of his face and he froze in utter shock and anger. There, gathered in his palm was not only a crumpled up check but also a sealed ministry invitation and more importantly – Anton's pendant.

What the fuck is this?!

Checking once more to make sure Harry was still in the dressing stalls, Draco took the check in his hands and hurriedly unfolded it, raising it up to his eyes into the light. Reading the names right off the slip of paper, he instantly heard Elisa's harsh, stinging words echoing in his head.

"She's a fake, Draco! The only reason she agreed to marry you is because your grandfather paid her to! 500,000 galleons to be exact!"

"500,000 galleons..." Draco read in a soft, pained whisper from the check, unable to prevent the sudden stinging at the corners of his eyes as he saw Jaimee's name written clearly as the recipient of the money. Lawrence Malfoy had signed just below it, signifying the close of their deal.

Grandfather had paid her all along...She never loved me. It was never real...None of it was real. It was a fake. Draco thought to himself as his hand suddenly fisted itself out of its own accord, crumpling the check into a tiny, angry ball of paper.

Shutting his eyes immediately to blink away the harsh emotions of pain and betrayal seeping into him, he was surprised when he couldn't find the strength to prevent a single tear from escaping his left eye and rolling down his cheek.

Good god...I'm...I'm such a fool. I'm such a goddamned fool.

In his mind, he pictured every single smile and laugh she had given him. He replayed in his head every single word and promise she had ever made – along with every single time she had whispered his name into his ear and told him that she loved him.

It was all a fucking lie. A PAID FUCKING LIE.

Forcing his eyes open, Draco angrily clenched his jaw and seized the ministry envelope with his other hand, ripping it open and pulling out the small card inside. Then, reading off the contents, he realized that it wasn't a card but a train ticket to Romania attached to a small invitation to join the Unspeakable Training Program signed by Vincent Ashford.

In fact, Draco recognized it immediately as the same one he had received from Ashford a couple of weeks ago and he felt even angrier, shoving the ticket back into the envelope. Glaring hatefully at the last remaining item – Anton's veela-infused pendant – Draco finally pieced everything he saw together, realizing for the first time just how manipulative Harry Potter truly was.

Damn Gryffindor even had ME fooled...She's not some noble, kind-hearted hero. She's a stuck-up, materialistic and deceitful little bitch just like everyone else! I can't believe I thought she was different! I can't believe I fell for it! He raged in his head, his entire body shaking with a kind of pain that he had never felt before.

All the previous anger and suspicion he had felt had returned with a vengeance, plaguing his mind with painful images that were ripping his heart into two. So that was why she never wanted children! She never wanted to marry me in the first place! She was PAID to do it! She and Anton were probably having a laugh over this entire thing! He even gave her his pendant, that bastard! She was sleeping with him the entire time! Draco thought angrily to himself, his suspicious thoughts taking on a life of its own.

She was probably planning on running off to Romania on the day of our wedding to leave me waiting for her like a goddamned fool at the altar! All she was waiting for was the damned money before she left! I wouldn't be surprised if she and Anton were planning to run off TOGETHER! He continued, getting himself more and more agitated with each passing thought.

He was so caught up in his thoughts that he failed to notice that a fully-dressed Harry had finally stepped out of the dressing room and was slowly walking up to him, a worried look in her bright green eyes.

“Draco...? What’s wrong?” She asked carefully, noting the heavy flush on his face and the way his eyes were glinting coldly like two dark coals. At the sound of her voice, Draco’s sneer hardened and he whirled around to face her, his eyes narrowing at her concerned features.

Ignoring her question, he held up all three items to her face, sneering wider when she paled in horror and turned wide, angry eyes up to meet his gaze. “You went through my things?! Malfoy, have you no respect at all for other people’s privacy—”

She gasped when he hurled the three items right at her in disgust before shoving her away from him, causing her to crash nosily against the row of lockers behind her.

“JUST WHEN THE HELL WERE YOU PLANNING ON TELLING ME ALL THESE THINGS, POTTER?! YOU LYING DECEITFUL LITTLE SLUT!” He exploded at her, his angry shouts echoing around the walls surrounding them and causing Harry to cringe at the hurt expression on his face.

Meeting his anger with a look of utmost confusion, she slowly bent down to pick the items off the floor, struggling to explain herself amidst his raging fury. “Draco, please let me explain....You have everything all wrong. I was planning on telling you everything tonight—”

“TELLING ME WHAT?! THAT THE REASON YOU AGREED TO MARRY ME IS BECAUSE MY GRANDFATHER PAID YOU 500,000 GALLEONS?! YOU DISGUSTING LITTLE WHORE, IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK A MARRIAGE WITH ME IS WORTH?!” Draco was seeing nothing but red now and his shoulders were heaving with each pained breath he took, causing Harry to bite her lip in concern when she saw the look of deep betrayal in his eyes.

“Draco, please! You don’t understand, please listen to me! Your grandfather came here several weeks ago to—”

“DO YOU HATE ME THAT MUCH, POTTER?! IT TOOK 500,000 GALLEONS FOR YOU TO AGREE TO MARRY ME?! I SUPPOSE THAT’S WHY WEASLEY WAS ABLE TO GET HIS DIRTY HANDS ON A DECENT RING TOO THEN, HUH?! I’LL BET YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS WERE LAUGHING AT ME BEHIND MY BACK!” Draco’s voice shook with anger as he walked right up to her, staring her down with a look of absolute hatred dripping from his eyes.

At this, Harry’s eyes flashed and she felt her own anger erupt in her chest. “The money I lent Ron to pay for his ring was my own, Draco. Don’t take this out on other people! I said LISTEN to me! I never took that check—”

“You and Weasley were nothing but money-sucking arseholes after all...In fact, I’ll bet he’s playing Lorraine along as well. When I’m through with him, he’ll never see her again...” Draco sneered through his hissed words, taunting her further until Harry finally snapped and shoved him away.

“I said LEAVE RON OUT OF THIS! LISTEN TO ME, DRACO! I NEVER took that check—”

“In fact, I wouldn’t even be surprised if you and Weasley were having some sick little affair or something. Just how many men have you manipulated using that hot little body of yours, Potter? You said it yourself didn’t you? You know exactly what seduces a man since you used to be one... What an enormous amount of power that must be for you.” He drawled out scathingly, causing a look of angry, insulted indignation to darken her eyes.

“You are being completely IRRATIONAL! I have NOT been sleeping around, Draco! What do you take me for?! Since I have been turned into a woman, I have been with only ONE man and that’s YOU! You ought to know, you MARK me every goddamn time!” She screamed at him, raising a hand and attempting to slap his face.

Draco let out a mocking laugh and easily caught her hand before it hit his cheek, flinging it back down at her. "Yeah but it STILL doesn't seem to keep you away from other men, huh? Take ANTON for instance! You just COULDN'T keep your hands off him, could you?! Pansy said he saw you getting cozy with him this week while I wasn't around! What is this Potter?" He yanked the pendant from her hands, holding it up to her eyes.

"Pansy Parkinson doesn't know shit—"

"Is this some kind of SICK gift he gave you for your efforts?! Did he give you this because you two are sweet on each other now or something? Is that it?!" He demanded, using his other hand and gripping her chin to tilt her face up to his, growing angrier when she refused to answer him.

"FUCKING TELL ME, POTTER!"

Again, he hurled the pendant at her, causing her flinch when it collided painfully with her cheek. "NO, DRACO! Anton came here to apologize to me! THAT'S ALL, DAMN IT! He gave me that pendant because he said he didn't want to use it anymore! I SWEAR TO MERLIN, THAT'S ALL! He's not as horrible as you think he is!" She snapped at him, shoving his hand off her chin and taking a step away from him.

"DON'T LIE TO ME, YOU BITCH! TELL ME YOU'RE CHEATING ON ME WITH THAT VEELA SCUM! TELL ME THAT NONE OF THIS WAS FUCKING REAL! TELL ME THAT YOU WERE PLANNING ON RUNNING OFF TO BECOME AN UNSPEAKABLE ON THE DAY OF OUR WEDDING USING THAT STUPID TRAIN TICKET!" Draco raged again and at this, Harry blinked in confusion, her eyes flicking down to inspect the opened envelope in her hands.

"What train ticket—" She stopped when she saw the small envelope Ashford had given her opened. She gasped and pulled out the train ticket to Romania inside, staring at it in shock. Draco saw her reaction and growled, yanking the ticket out of her hands and hurling it to the ground.

“JUST WHEN WERE YOU PLANNING ON TELLING ME ALL THIS, POTTER?! DID YOU HONESTLY JUST INTEND TO PLAY ME ALONG LIKE SOME GODDAMNED FOOL THE ENTIRE TIME?!” He yelled at her, turning around sharply to slam his fist into a nearby locker. The harsh sound caused Harry to flinch in both shock and helpless desperation.

“Draco, it doesn’t matter! I spoke to Ashford, I DECLINED the invitation just like YOU did! He just gave that envelope to me, I didn’t even know it was a train ticket! Please just calm down and let me explain!” She pleaded loudly, trying to place her hands on his cheek but Draco shoved her hands away, shaking his head desperately to drown her words out.

“Ashford, huh? Is that why you were so against having children with me? You wanted to run along with Ashford to Romania and become a goddamn Unspeakable? I suppose you slept with Ashford TOO then, didn’t you? How much did HE pay you for that? 500,000 galleons?!” He mocked again and this time, he was unable to prevent the harsh, stinging slap that Harry had sent to his face.

Snapping his head back up to glare at her, he saw the wounded, disgusted look on her features before she spoke again, her voice sounding exhausted and resigned.

“First I’m sleeping with Ron...Then Anton...Now Ashford? The man is gay, Draco. Would you make up your mind on who I’m supposed to be cheating on you with, Draco? It’s getting ridiculous.” She muttered angrily under her breath, narrowing her eyes before turning to walk away.

Before she could, Draco’s hand had clamped down tightly against her arm and he whirled her around – their faces inches apart. He met her glare with his own, his nails digging angrily into the skin of her arm and causing her to wince in pain.

“WHY DIDN’T YOU TELL ME ANY OF THIS?!”

Harry finally snapped and shoved him off her, clutching her arm and giving him a derisive sneer. “You don’t OWN me, Malfoy! I’m not

obliged to tell you EVERYTHING about my life!” She screamed at him, shoving him away again but Draco held his ground, barely moving an inch.

“YES I DO! MY GRANDFATHER PAID YOU TO BE MY FIANCE, UNFORTUNATELY!” He pointed out, shoving her backwards again until she was trapped between his body and the row of lockers behind them. She struggled against him, trying to push him off her smaller frame.

“OH YEAH?! WELL WHILE WE’RE DOING CONFESSIONS, DRACO...WHY DON’T YOU TELL ME SOMETHING THEN? SOMETHING I’VE ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW!” She blurted out, looking up defiantly into his angry features as he caged her in by placing his hands on either side of her head.

“FUCK OFF, POTTER—”

“WHEN YOU SAID YOU ‘LOVED’ ME, DID YOU MEAN IT?! DO YOU ACTUALLY LOVE ‘ME’ OR DO YOU JUST LOVE YOUR IDEA OF YOUR ‘PERFECT GIRL’?!”

The question had caught Draco completely off guard and he froze, blinking up at the demanding gaze in her eyes. “What are on about now, Potter?!” He growled impatiently, trying to walk away but this time, it was Jaimee who held him back by his wrist, forcing him to look at her face.

“Tell me, Draco! You care so much about being so damn ‘perfect’ all the time, don’t you? Perfect this, perfect that! Answer me! Do you really love me for who I am or because you think I’m the ‘perfect girl’?!” She asked again, her voice dropping to a soft whisper but he caught each word easily and he glared at her instead when he found himself unable to directly answer her question.

“What are you talking about?! I thought we were already past this! If anything, you’re the one who’s done nothing but lie to me and play me around! I—”

“ANSWER ME AND TELL ME THE TRUTH, DRACO!” She screamed sharply at him, her voice raising several levels to a piercing high pitch that filled the stony silence of the locker room. When Draco cringed and looked down at her face again, he managed a guarded sneer and raised a single eyebrow in feigned disdain.

Deliberately choosing to ignore her question, he yanked his wrist out of her grasp and turned around, ignoring the unshed tears of stunned realization he had seen forming in her eyes.

“Potter...I think this proves...More than anything... That we are obviously unfit to continue this engagement any further. I think it’s best if we end this.”

Draco never saw the anger in Harry’s eyes fading slowly until only pain and humiliation was left burning in the emerald green depths, her slim shoulders trembling as she fought desperately to hold herself together. Swallowing the lump in her throat, she forced herself to speak – her voice coming out in a shaky, heartbroken whisper.

“Y—You just...You just answered my question for me, Draco...”

Her words sliced right through his heart and he turned his face sharply away to hide the tears that were forming in his own eyes, blurring his vision until he could no longer see anything except for the glare of the light above their heads.

“You’re nothing but a lying, money-grabbing little bitch, Potter.” Draco surprised himself when his voice had come out steady and even – betraying the horrible pain that was plaguing and ripping his entire chest into shreds.

Harry was silent after that, glaring silently into Draco’s back as the tears continued to spill down her cheeks and drop listlessly to the floor. A sudden unfamiliar sob escaped her lips but she didn’t bother holding it back, carefully bending back down to gather her things back into her bag.

“I think you’re right, Malfoy...This engagement...is over.”



Draco didn't answer her, turning around sharply to walk back to his own bag and hastily struggling to gather his things before she saw the look of pain in his face. The Gryffindor had just closed her locker when Draco spoke up again, a harsh laugh escaping his lips.

"I'm sorry, Potter. But unlike what Anton must have promised you...I don't offer women the world." He mocked callously, standing back up and giving her one last hateful glare.

Harry, however, didn't take the bait but simply blinked at him with an overwhelming calmness that caused Draco to momentarily consider if everything she had been saying was actually true. Unfortunately, he never got the chance to reflect further on his theories when Harry finally inclined her head towards him in a nod of farewell, adjusting the strap of her bag on her shoulder.

"Anton never said anything like that...But even if he had...I never would have wanted the world, Draco. I just wanted to be a part of yours."

His face suddenly grew pale and froze in stunned realization after hearing this, her words echoing in his head and snapping him out of his own stupidity.

Oh god...Malfoy, you idiot...What are you doing?!

Harry was already halfway out the door when he realized the horrible mistake he had made with his accusations and he tore off after the Gryffindor, his heart filling with a raw feeling of aching tenderness that he had never felt before.

"H—Harry, wait—"

Draco stopped, however, when both he and Harry were suddenly met with Hermione's pale, crying figure stumbling noisily into the room. The Head Girl rushed hurriedly towards them from the locker room entrance, her brown eyes puffy and red from the tears that were pouring down her pale cheeks.

“HARRY! DRACO! OH GOD, THANK GOODNESS YOU'RE BOTH HERE! SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAS HAPPENED!” She cried out desperately as she threw her trembling arms around Harry's neck, forcing the other girl to drop her bag when the brunette buried her face into her shoulder.

“Hermione, what's wrong? What happened? Tell me!” Harry asked in immediate concern – all thoughts of Draco forgotten as she wrapped her own arms tightly around her best friend's pale frame and tried to rub soothing circles on her back.

Draco didn't bother hiding his ire and leveled Hermione with an impatient glare. “Granger, what the hell do you want?! You can't just go intruding in on other people's conversations like that—”

He was immediately cut off when Hermione looked up and met both their eyes, the look in her brown orbs one of immense fear and panic.

“I—It's the children! I—It's Keira and Isabella...” She began shakily, causing all the blood to rush out of Harry's face when she felt an eerie feeling of foreboding flood her senses.

“They're...They're gone, Harry! They've been kidnapped!”

A/N: : BOMB LOUDLY EXPLODES SOMEWHERE IN THE VICINITY:

I am so evil. I just had to do that! Hahaha. I'm so sorry! I don't know if any of you are hoping to kill or at least maim me right now but at least I got this chapter up fast right? Hehe.

I apologize if none of you had seen this coming but I did drop all the appropriate little signs and foreshadowing bits in the previous chapters before this. :wink: If you don't believe me, you can check them out yourselves to get some clues as to what might happen next.

Oh and as usual, the URL for the deleted scene is posted on my profile page. If any of you are wondering whether I'll be writing a more tender and gentle love scene between our two protagonists, don't

worry. I intend to write one last rated scene for those who want to see Draco's loving side for a change. Hahaha.

Lastly, don't worry everyone! I am a sucker for happy endings and despite all the drama and conflict in this chapter, I PROMISE you all that things will work out in the end. Till then, you'll all have to send in your thoughts and comments alright?

PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO REVIEW! CHEERS!

## Chapter 32 – Reality Catches Up

Harry was already running out of the locker room faster than any of them could blink, oblivious to Hermione's loud calls after her as she tore through the Quidditch field. Draco tried to run after her but fell behind when the Gryffindor ducked back into the castle and raced up the stairs to the small, anxious crowd of adults gathered by the corridors.

“WHERE IS MY DAUGHTER?! No! I DEMAND to that you all find my daughter this instant!” Regina was screaming at a group of flustered Aurors that were gathered by the entrance – all of which were trying to converse with the group of teachers that had formed around them.

The red-haired woman was crying hysterically and Sirius was restraining her from behind, barking angry instructions at the investigative officials who were trying to gather information from them. Blaise and his parents were right behind them, their faces red with suppressed anger and emotions as they struggled to talk to the investigators.

“HOW COULD THOSE KIDNAPPERS EVEN HAVE GOTTEN ONTO SCHOOL GROUNDS?!” Blaise snarled loudly as he grabbed one of the nearby dark-haired Aurors by the collar and shoved him roughly away, causing the other man's eyes to narrow irritably at him.

“Hogwarts has reportedly been too lax with the number of guests apparating in and out of school premises because of the Hunting Season. Surely you all must have noticed.” The dark-haired Auror said gruffly, his eyes flicking back to the investigative reports in his hands.

Blaise's eyes flashed and he attempted to tackle the Auror to the ground for his carelessness but his father, Antonio Zabini, held him back and leveled the Auror with a fierce glare. “And the other Aurors? What are they trying to do now? How do they expect to track down the whereabouts of my daughter?” He hissed in a deadly whisper, his eyes narrowing into tiny slits.

This time it was Kingsley who answered him and the Head Auror gave both the Zabinis and Regina what he hoped to be a comforting look. “Mr. Zabini, we are magically tracing all open floo networks located within the area as we speak. They must have used floo to get here and obviously used it to get back, we should find them in no time—”

“WE DON’T HAVE TIME! MY DAUGHTER HAS BEEN KIDNAPPED AND I WANT TO BE OUT THERE LOOKING FOR HER—”

“Miss Regina, I understand your distress but you have to calm down! The Quidditch pitch was filled with people; it will take time for us to pinpoint reasonable suspects!” A female Auror beside Kingsley suddenly cut in but this time it was Sirius who snapped at them.

“Well you’re obviously not doing a good enough job! Two little girls have been kidnapped, do you not understand the seriousness of this situation?!” The black-haired marauder snapped, rubbing soothing circles onto Regina’s back as she continued to cry against him.

Again, Kingsley tried to talk – his face looking weary as he gazed back at their harsh faces. “We are doing all that we can, Black... I have my men on the case right now—”

“WELL SEND MORE OF THEM! MY SISTER WAS KIDNAPPED! AGAIN! I WANT THE BASTARDS WHO DID IT LOCKED UP IN AZKABAN!” Blaise exploded, his voice lowering only when he heard his mother’s heartbroken sob beside him and he wrapped his arms around her in comfort.

Biting her lip, this was the last thing Harry had heard before she walked right into the scene, inadvertently directing all their attention on her. The moment Regina had seen her; the woman tore herself from Sirius’ arms and ran up to the younger girl, grabbing her hands tightly in hers.

“PLEASE Harry... You saved her once, I know you can help me find Keira somehow! Please!” Regina sobbed against her, burying her face into her hands as Harry awkwardly tried to console her with uneasy pats on the shoulder.

Sirius winced and walked up to them, giving Harry an apologetic glance. “Now, Regina...I highly doubt it’s fair for you to ask Harry that. She doesn’t know where Keira is either and it could be dangerous—”

“MY FIVE-YEAR-OLD IS OUT THERE, SIRIUS! SHE HAS BEEN KIDNAPPED AND I DON’T KNOW WHERE SHE IS! DO YOU THINK I CARE ABOUT BEING FAIR RIGHT NOW?!” She snapped back at him in a loud scream, causing both Sirius and Harry to wince when they heard the anger in her voice.

By this time, Draco had managed to reach them and walked right up to Blaise, giving his best friend a comforting pat on the shoulder. Hermione arrived right after him, her cheeks flushed in exhaustion as she walked over to there Blaise stood with his parents.

Panting for breath, Harry turned to Kingsley and gave the man a contemplative look. “Have you searched the grounds, Kingsley? The Forbidden forest? Hogsmeade? The castle? The skies?” She asked grimly, causing an irritated look to cross the Head Auror’s face.

“Of course we have, Potter! We have searched the entire forest and village for a sign of them, nothing! We’re checking the floo network right now to determine where they could have gone!” Kingsley snapped at her before turning back to the small group of Aurors behind him.

Before he could stop himself, Blaise shrugged Draco’s hand off his shoulder and turned to give Hermione an angry, accusing glare. “YOU! HERMIONE, YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE WATCHING HER! WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED?!” He raged at her, causing a flurry of simultaneous events to erupt.

The remaining aristocrats – Blaise’s mother, father and Draco raised an accusing eyebrow at Hermione while the said Gryffindor held back a choked-up sob and stepped back, only to bump in Harry as the black-haired girl walked up to her.

Instantly, Hermione’s face crumpled and she turned to bury her face against Harry’s shoulder, hiding her tears in her best friend’s arms.

“I—It wasn’t my fault, Blaise! I was watching her the entire time but as soon as the match was over, she ran off ahead of me to find you! I spent the entire time trying to chase after her but she got lost in the crowd!” She managed to stutter out, desperately trying to hold in her tears as she looked back up to meet Blaise’s harsh glare.

“WELL YOU SHOULD HAVE TRIED HARDER!” The Italian Slytherin snapped again, causing Hermione to flinch and Harry to glare at him when she heard the accusation still in his words. Tightening her arms around her trembling best friend, she looked up and met Blaise’s anger with a fierce one of her own.

“Zabini, this isn’t Hermione’s fault! If anything, you’re not making things any better at all by pointing fingers at people!” She retorted at him, narrowing her green eyes as she continued to rub Hermione’s shoulders soothingly in comfort.

Draco’s jaw tightened slightly in irritation at the way Harry was holding Hermione but he held back his tongue, watching the scene with a guarded gaze. Blaise looked as though he was going to argue but instead, he sighed wearily and buried his face in his hands.

By this time, both Antonio Zabini and his wife were shouting at Kingsley again – hurling insults and accusations back and forth as they continued to harass him for the possible whereabouts of their daughter. Regina wasn’t doing any better and was ignoring Sirius half-hearted attempts to restrain her from slapping one of the Aurors in the face.

“Dumbledore, what is the meaning of this?! I was told that your school was a safe place! My daughter is gone and I see that your security measures around the campus have been lax?!” Blaise’s father yelled angrily as Dumbledore finally arrived onto the scene – looking older than Harry had ever seen him before.

“Forgive me, Mr. Zabini...Ms. Vallehan...Rest assured, I have all my professors scouring the castle and asking all the students for both Isabella and Keira as we speak. If all of us would just remain calm—”

“HOW DO YOU EXPECT ME TO REMAIN CALM?! MY DAUGHTER IS GONE! I DON’T EVEN KNOW IF SHE’S HURT OR IF SHE’S—” Regina’s voice ended up in a choked-up sob and she ended up collapsing against Sirius again, oblivious to the growing crowd of students watching around them.

Katherine Zabini – Blaise’s mother – took after Regina’s unfinished sentence and faced the Headmaster with an anger in her face that easily outmatched her son’s. “Headmaster Dumbledore. If you or your pathetic school does not procure the whereabouts of my daughter within the next hour, my family will file a lawsuit against you and all your pathetic teachers—”

“KINGSLEY! PROFESSOR DUMBLEDORE!”

They all stopped and turned around at the same time to see one of Kingsley’s assistant Aurors racing toward them, a piece of parchment in his hands. The look on his mousey face was grim with anxious turmoil as he reached them, panting loudly for breath.

Regina and Katherine were on him at once, grabbing hold of his robes and shaking him in angry impatience. “What is it?! Where are they?! IF YOU DON’T TELL US RIGHT NOW—”

The Auror shrugged their arms off, turning to face Kingsley and Dumbledore’s anxious faces. “We just got the results of the floo network tracking agency. They said that the floo networks around the area haven’t been accessed within the last five hours!” He rushed out, causing all the blood to drain from Harry’s face.

“What does that mean?! Of course someone’s used floo! How else could they have escaped the school premises?!” Sirius pointed out angrily, oblivious to the look of realization that had crossed everyone else’s face.

Draco snorted at this, raising his eyebrow at the marauder’s apparent ignorance. “It means, my dim-witted Uncle, that the kidnappers haven’t escaped school premises yet. They’re obviously still somewhere around here.” He concluded for them, causing Blaise’s eyes to widen in shock.



“Of course...Hogwarts premises does not allow for apparition to take place. Floo is the only way in and out of Hogwarts! And the only available fireplace registered for use is right in the Headmaster's office.” Kingsley agreed, nodding to two of his men.

“I want a whole team of Aurors guarding the Headmaster's office immediately. Nobody is getting out of this castle!” He instructed briskly, to which the Aurors nodded and ran off. Turning to the remaining group of Aurors beside him, he gestured frantically towards the village.

“The rest of you! I want you blocking all working floo-linked fireplaces in Hogsmeade! Get right to it! NOW!” He barked out and at once, the men had pulled out their wands and were rushing towards the village.

Dumbledore finally noticed the other students watching and he sighed, gesturing to McGonagall beside him to clear them away from the scene. Kingsley followed after them, heading up towards the Headmaster's office.

“I want to go with them!” Antonio snapped angrily as he and Katherine hurried inside after Kingsley, followed closely by Sirius and Regina behind them. Hermione looked imploringly at Blaise but the Slytherin was staring off in the direction of the Forbidden Forest – a faraway look in his eyes.

As soon as the other students had finally cleared out and the four teenagers were alone in the corridor, Draco turned to his best friend and punched him lightly on the shoulder to get his attention. Blaise blinked and turned to him, his thoughts obviously somewhere else.

“What? What's wrong with you? Aren't you going to go follow after your parents?” He asked pointedly but Blaise shook his head, his eyes narrowed in thought. “No... I was just thinking... I remember Isabella pointing to the Forbidden Forest a couple of days ago. I brushed it off as nothing but...” His voice trailed off but Harry interrupted him, shaking her head at his suggestion.

“No, Zabini. The Forbidden Forest may have been where they were hiding but I doubt they’d take the children to an open area. No...Kingsley’s right. They’re probably hiding somewhere in the castle. It was the most deserted area during the match.” She thought out loud but Draco snapped at her, sneering at the suggestion.

“They already said they’ve checked every known room inside the castle, Pothead! The only remaining logical choice is the forbidden forest or Hogsmeade! Come on, Blaise! I’ll go with you. Let’s look for them in the forest first!” Before Harry or Hermione could say anything, both Slytherins were already running off towards the Forbidden Forest, their wands held readily in their hands.

“Blaise! Draco! Wait! The Aurors are already checking the forest and the village! You’re wasting your time—” Hermione tried to run after them but Harry placed a hand on her arm to hold her back, turning the other girl around to face her.

Seeing the calculating look in Harry’s eyes, Hermione managed to give her a confused look through her tear-streaked face. “Wh—What? Harry, aren’t we going to go with them—”

“Let’s check the castle again, ‘Mione.” Was all she said and Hermione looked up to see Harry’s forehead wrinkled in thought. Turning briefly around to check that no one was listening to them, she walked up closer to Jaimee and looked up into her friend’s worried face.

“Harry, they’re not there! We have to search someplace else! We can’t just stand here waiting for nothing to happen!” Hermione argued, practically shaking the other girl but Harry shook her head more firmly, looking back up at Hogwarts in silence.

“Call it a gut feeling but I really think they’re somewhere in the castle! There are hundreds of rooms in there! Hermione you have to help me go look for them!” She blurted out but Hermione looked at her as though she was crazy.

“What? Now?! Harry, we’re wasting our time! Like Draco said, the Aurors have already checked every known room in the castle! We

have no idea where they are! The best place we can look for them is outside—”

At her words, Harry’s eyes finally widened and she grabbed Hermione by the front of her robes, jostling the other girl in shock.

“Exactly what you said, Hermione!”

Hermione blinked back at him, raising a single eyebrow in incredulity. “That the Aurors have already checked every known room in the castle?!” She offered, her voice cracking when Harry nodded ecstatically, a wide grin spreading out onto her face.

“That’s it! They’ve checked every known room in the castle! Hermione, what’s a room you remember in Hogwarts that no one would normally know about or initially think about looking in?!” She asked her eagerly, watching as a myriad of confused emotions crossed her best friend’s face.

Shrugging helplessly, Hermione ran a hand through her hair in desperation before she blurted out the first thing that popped into her mind. “I don’t know, Harry...The Room of Requirement?” She answered but Harry made a tutting sound and shook her head fiercely at her.

“No! Think, Hermione! Come on!”

Hermione shoved her hands away and gave her an angry glare. “Harry, we have NO TIME for guessing games! What are you suggesting—”

“The Chamber of Secrets! I doubt they’ve checked that room already, maybe they’re hiding in there! Let’s go search in there first!” She rushed out, already yanking onto Hermione’s hand as she dragged the brunette with her back to the castle entrance.

“Harry, you’re insane! No one can get into the Chamber of Secrets unless he or she is a parselmouth, remember?!” She managed to get out as she and Harry raced through the castle corridors, shoving past

several startled students who were piling back to their dormitories in panic.

“Not true, Hermione! Last year, Ron got in there just by imitating parseltongue. It isn’t that hard! Come on! We’ve got nothing to lose if we’re wrong!” She persisted as they both made their way to the abandoned girl’s bathroom they used during their second year.

Grunting as they shoved through the door, Hermione barely caught a glimpse of the bathroom’s familiar flooded floors before Harry was already heading for the snake-marked sink and was hissing something incomprehensible in parseltongue.

“Harry, wait!”

“Hermione, stop nudging me! Your elbows are hitting my breasts!” Harry hissed irritably under her breath at the Head Girl as they walked stealthily through the rocky cave entrance leading to the Chamber of Secrets. Hermione blushed at this and ceased her actions at once but not her frantic worrying.

Despite her friend’s ignorance of her for the past five minutes since they jumped down onto the chamber, she spoke up again anyway. “Harry, this is crazy! You’re being completely reckless and impulsive! Blaise and Draco are probably doing much better help with the search than we are—”

“Shhh! Keep quiet! Maybe we’ll get lucky! We’ll be out soon if there’s really nothing here!” The black-haired Gryffindor snapped again as she raised her wand and muttered a quick ‘lumos’ charm to inspect their surroundings.

Looking around the rocky area, Harry noted idly that the entrance to the Chamber itself hadn’t really changed that much since she and Ron had entered it back in their second year with Lockhart. Save for the added rocks and the fact that the gigantic basilisk skin they had seen then had already decayed into dust, it looked exactly as she remembered.

Hermione took Harry's casual inspection as something negative and she bit her lip, latching onto the other girl's arm again and attempting to drag her back out. "Harry, come on! There's nothing here! Let's go get Ron and check the village! Maybe we'll find something there—"

She was cut off when Harry broke free from her grasp and ran forward, her face paling in a mixture of fear and dread. Hermione followed after her, watching as the other Gryffindor knelt down to the rocky ground and gathered something that had fallen onto the rocks into her hands.

"Hermione..." Harry's voice had trailed off but Hermione nodded in quiet understanding as she walked up to her, her brown eyes widening as they flickered to the small, familiar Lion stuffed toy Harry was holding in her hands.

Both girls met each other's eyes and pale, nervous face. "That's Keira's..." Hermione whispered softly as she took the stuffed toy into her hands, holding it up to her face and caressing it slightly with shaky, trembling fingers.

"Harry—"

"Hermione, you've got to go back and tell the others now." Harry interrupted her firmly, steadying herself back onto her feet and tightening her grip around her wand. At her words, Hermione's eyes widened and she shook her head fiercely, looking at the other girl as though she had just admitted to having a crush on Dumbledore.

"What?! Harry, are you mad?! I'm not leaving you alone in here! Let's go back together now—"

"One of us has to go back and tell Kingsley where the kids are! I don't know about you, Hermione but I'm not leaving those kids in there with those bastards a second longer than they have to!" She immediately snapped back, forcing Hermione to color and gasp at her words.

"And you think I do?! Harry, Blaise left Isabella with me! I was supposed to be watching out for her and now she's gone! I'm going in

there with you whether you like it or not!” She retorted back angrily, her cheeks flushed and her eyes glinting with stubborn determination.

For a moment, Harry considered arguing with her again and forcing her to head on back up to tell the others. However, seeing the evident glassiness of the Head Girl’s eyes, she sighed and relented, nodding and earning herself a relieved smile from the brunette.

“Alright, ‘Mione...But we’ll need a plan first—”

Hermione grabbed her by the shoulders before she could say anything else, shaking her frantically and forcing Harry to look her directly in the eye.

“Harry, listen to me carefully! We have...no idea...who we’re up against! We can not afford to get ourselves hurt too and make things worse for everyone else, do you understand me?!” She hissed out, her gaze flicking suspiciously every now and then around them to make sure they were alone.

Harry offered her a sheepish smile. “So basically, you’re saying... ‘Don’t you dare screw up Potter or I’ll kick your arse to hell?’” She asked bluntly, watching as Hermione’s twitched slightly and she managed a weak smile at the obvious quip.

“In a manner of speaking, I suppose.” Hermione managed to answer, nodding weakly and taking Harry’s hand in hers, giving the limb a terrified squeeze. Harry squeezed her fingers back, nodding and slowly setting her gaze back onto the entrance.

“Don’t worry, Hermione. If I get blasted in there, you can have all my possessions. Please tell Ron that he can have all my old dirty magazines – OW!” Harry scowled and rubbed the sore bruise on her arm where Hermione had punched her.

The brunette was glaring at her, sniffing indignantly in response to her quip. “That is not funny, Harry Potter.” Was all she said, her voice trembling slightly as she tightened her fingers around the wand she held in her hand.

Sighing, Harry finally relented and turned Hermione to face her, giving the other girl a small, comforting smile. "Look... 'Mione... We've faced Voldemort together last year. This... Is just a bunch of stupid idiots who try to make money out of kidnapping children. And if we're scared right now, imagine how scared they are. I doubt this will even last long." She began, waiting until Hermione nodded for her to continue.

"I'm going in there... I don't know how reckless that makes me. That's just the way I've always been... Do you really want to go in with me?" She finished, looking up into Hermione's eyes and searching for her response. When Hermione took a deep breath and forced herself to nod, Harry gave her a small, encouraging grin.

"Alright... Let's go."

"I don't understand why we had to kidnap the Zabini kid too. Hammerstone said he only wanted us to kidnap his daughter!"

Harry held a finger up to her lips to indicate for Hermione to be silent as they crept through the chamber's large drainage pipes. The echoing voices coming from the center of the chamber grew louder and louder as they neared the three cloaked figures standing in front of the statue of Salazar Slytherin just by a small pool of murky water.

"You idiots! It wasn't Hammerstone, it was his mistress who wanted the Zabini kid again. Merlin knows why, she already paid us a huge amount of money to do it the first time." Another gruff voice answered, the words nearly causing Hermione to gasp had Harry not given her a fierce glare.

"Mistress? Ain't she a little too young to be Hammerstone's mistress? I heard she was just his secretary. What was her name again?"

Again, Harry had to keep her hand clamped on Hermione's mouth as they crawled closer to the center of the chamber, peering through the pipe's caged end into the sneering, smoking forms of three cloaked men circled around two small figures.

Upon closer inspection, Harry finally saw Keira and Isabella huddled together – tied by their wrists and ankles by a length of magical rope – just by one of the men’s feet. Both girls were crying and sobbing quietly to themselves while one of the men near them lit up a cigar, snapping irritably at them to shut up.

“Bastards...” Hermione muttered under her breath just loud enough for Harry to hear her, her brown eyes narrowing in concealed anger. Harry could only nod wordlessly, her own eyes circling the chamber and inspecting the appearances of the three cloaked men.

Two of them, unfortunately, she had never seen before in her life. One had a scruffy beard and a large, crooked nose while another had a scruffy, unshaven chin and bald head. Both of them seemed to be cackling with one another, pausing every now and then to take a whiff of their cigar.

The last man who had seated himself near Salazar Slytherin’s head, however, seemed oddly familiar. Narrowing her eyes, Harry peered closer against the pipe’s caged lid and inspected the third man’s appearance in growing confusion.

Unlike the other two, this one was obviously younger. He had dark hair, beady eyes and obviously looked much more educated than the other two. In fact, this one held himself up with the stance of an aristocrat and was casually writing into a small piece of parchment with an expensive feather quill.

I know that guy...He’s...Anton pointed him out at our engagement party! He’s...Harry tried in vain to remember his name but she couldn’t and she continued to curse herself in frustration.

“Oy! Finkleman! What’s the name of Hammerstone’s hot mistress lady again?! You met her at that engagement party you attended right?!” One of the scruffy-looking men called out again, this time causing Harry’s eyes to snap wide open in shock as she finally realized who the third man was.



“Parker Finkleman...” She hissed to Hermione, causing the Head Girl to look at her in confusion when she heard her words. “What? Who’s that, Harry?” She whispered back, both of them turning back to watch as Finkleman sneered and got up, walking over to take the other man’s offered cigar.

“Vittoria de Luca...She’s not just a secretary. She’s an Italian heiress. I heard she and Hammerstone have been having an affair since her internship for Hammerstone’s company this year.” He told them gleefully, smirking at the look of surprise on their faces.

Hermione bit her tongue to keep from gasping out loud again, to which Harry answered her by hitting her lightly on the head in warning.

“So that’s around 1.5 million galleons to us from Hammerstone and another 1 million from de Luca. Add in a possible total of 5 million galleons from both families for ransom.” Finkleman added with a chuckle, flicking his wand and igniting the tip of his cigarette.

Then, leaning back against the wall, he leered to himself and let out a puff of smoke. “That chit’s really got it in for the Zabini family. First time she had us kidnap that brat; she earned herself half of the 10 million we asked for.” He thought loudly and one of the other men spoke up again to answer him.

“What’s her reason this time? Hammerstone’s company is going down the drain isn’t it? Is that why de Luca is hoping to get more money?” He asked but Finkleman shook his head, blowing out another puff of smoke that dangerously neared the pipe Harry and Hermione had snuck in through.

“She and Hammerstone were talking about her marrying into the Zabini family to steal more money. This little scam of hers has something to do with breaking up the Zabini heir’s engagement to a mudblood. Don’t know the full details though. Hammerstone, on the other hand, wants his kid kidnapped to win custody over his ex-wife for ‘reckless parenting’ apparently.” He explained, rolling his eyes to himself.

“Pureblooded families and their dysfunctional problems. But hey... without it, I’d never earn so much money being hired for such exciting scams like this.” He shrugged, cackling loudly when the other two burst out into hearty sniggers. Keira and Isabella both hugged themselves tightly at the sound of the men’s laughter, shivering in fear as tears continued to stream down their cheeks.

As the men began to talk amongst themselves again, Hermione finally turned to look at Harry, blinking when she saw the similar horror and indignation in those green eyes reflected from her own. “Oh my god... Vittoria and Keira’s father—” Hermione’s voice broke off and she held back a sob as Harry nodded firmly, squeezing her hand to get her attention.

“I know, Hermione. Keep yourself together...Please.” She shushed her, her eyes flicking back to Finkleman as he let out another rambunctious round of laughter.

“Ugh...I’m bored, Finkleman! Remind me again why we’re waiting down here! Why don’t we make a run for it now?!” The bald man complained loudly as he let out a nasty cough, taking a long swig of his firewhiskey a moment after.

Finkleman rolled his eyes at their ignorance, giving the other men a derogatory sneer. “You two are idiots. Kingsley has bloody Aurors guarding the entire castle. We’re lucky most people aren’t aware of this room existing at all. If we run for it now, we’ll get caught.” He pointed out, much to the others’ disappointment.

“But they know we’re still somewhere around here...How do we get them away from the castle?” The man with the beard countered, flicking the ashes from his cigarette to the ground. Finkleman raised an eyebrow, twirling his wand around in his hand.

“The other guys should be making a commotion in the village and forest now. That ought to draw their attention away from the castle for some time. Let’s wait for about fifteen more minutes before we try sneaking out.” He answered, checking his watch briefly.

After another minute, he spoke again. "Perhaps we ought to do the kidnapping bit more...We seem to earn a lot of profit from it lately. Say, how about we target the Malfoy family next? I saw a blonde toddler in that engagement party, I was in." He suggested lightly with a laugh.

His partner scoffed slightly, throwing his cigarette to the ground. "I've been suggesting that for months now. The Malfoys are the most loaded wizarding family in England. Why haven't we stolen from them yet—"

OVER MY DEAD BODY, YOU BASTARDS! Harry thought angrily, gritting her teeth. She almost burst right through the pipe had Hermione not stopped her, shaking her head at the other Gryffindor's angry growl. "Harry, don't! We can't just go bursting in there! They have wands too—"

A tuft of Hermione's hair brushed against Harry's nose, causing the other girl to freeze mid-movement as she felt a horrible urge to sneeze out loud. "H—Hermione! Y—Your hair...I—I have to—"

Hermione's eyes widened and she watched Harry in confusion.

"What—"

Harry let out a barely muffled sneeze and immediately cringed as the small sound echoed loudly through the small pipe they had crawled through – drawing the attention of all three men in the chamber towards their direction.

"What was that?!"

"Shit!" Harry hissed under her breath, frantically pulling her wand out of her pocket as she heard three pairs of footsteps heading towards them. Hermione merely bit her tongue beside her, her own hand shakily grasping her wand.

"Somebody's in here listening..." Finkleman's voice trailed off and Harry and Hermione held their breath, waiting silently as the footsteps

heading toward them drew nearer and nearer. Just as Harry caught a glimpse of a large boot, they heard Finkleman shouting angrily.

“THERE! IN THAT PIPE! THEY’RE IN THERE! GET THEM! KILL THEM!”

“HERMIONE, GET THE GIRLS!” Harry yelled out loud just before she shoved the pipe’s lid open and she tackled the man hovering near them. Hermione screamed in panic but did as she was told, running as fast as she could towards the huddled children near the center of the chamber.

“Avada—”

“GET SOME NEW MATERIAL!” Harry snapped angrily as she summoned the bearded man’s wand into her hand before he could complete the killing curse. The man seemed to gape at her in shock but Harry didn’t have time to dwell on it as someone grabbed her from behind, wrapping his arms around her neck and dragging her backwards.

“HARRY!” Hermione screamed after her, looking up from where she was burning the ropes off Keira and Isabella’s feet but Harry called out after her, wrestling herself wildly out of the man’s tight grasps.

“I’M FINE! JUST GET THE GIRLS OUT OF HERE FIRST!”

“That’sPOTTER you imbeciles! She’s the Malfoy heiress! We can make a bloody fortune if we catch her!” Finkleman growled at them, yanking his wand out of his pocket and aiming it right at the top of Harry’s head.

“HARRY, WATCH OUT—”

“CONFUNDO!”

Both Hermione and Keira screamed in horror as Harry gave a cry of pain before stumbling on her knees onto water-flooded floors, her eyes looking completely disoriented. Beside them, Keira’s feet were

still untied and Hermione bit back a sob as she hurriedly began to unlace them – forcing her attention away from her best friend.

The brunette never noticed Finkleman coming right up behind her with a sneer on his face, his wand now directly pointed at Hermione's neck. Seeing him hovering above her shoulder, Isabella's eyes widened and she pointed a finger up at him, her mouth opening albeit hesitantly.

“Stupid, stupid girls... STUPEF—”

“HERMIONE! BEHIND YOU!”

Hermione had to blink in shock when she heard Isabella's voice for the first time. Following her finger up, the Head Girl screamed again and ducked just as the stunning curse flew past her, hitting against Salazar Slytherin's stone forehead.

Finkleman didn't appreciate this and was about to aim another curse at her when a loud 'shmack' from behind him halted both his and Hermione's actions. Then – blinking stupidly a couple of times – Finkleman gave one loud groan of pain before his eyes rolled backwards and he collapsed onto the ground in a dead faint.

Staring at his unconscious figure in shock, Hermione forced her eyes back up and was met with Harry's scowling, angry features – a gigantic rock held tightly in both her hands.

“Stupid bastard thinks he can confound me and get away with it...” Harry muttered angrily under her breath, dropping the rock back onto the ground with a loud splash. Behind them, the two men Finkleman had come with weren't much better off and were unconscious on the ground from a powerful stunning spell – one of Harry's evidently favorite spells.

In spite of herself, Hermione laughed weakly in relief as she finally untied Isabella's feet while a sobbing Keira twisted herself out of her arms and came rushing up into Harry's. Hermione watched them for a minute, smiling as Harry stroked Keira's hair and whispered comforting words into her ear.

Then, scooping Isabella up into her arms, Hermione gave her best friend a small smile. “I guess you’ve had a lot of practice fighting this season, huh...?” She teased lightly, stroking Isabella’s dark hair as the girl collapsed against her and buried her tear-streaked face into her shoulder.

Harry laughed at her quip, hoisting Keira up into her arms as well and holding the girl tightly against her. “Yeah...I guess I did. Let’s...Let’s go back and get these girls to their families.” She said softly, sighing when Keira trembled violently in her arms again and held back another sob.

Hermione nodded, raising her wand casting a binding spell on all three men before she slowly followed Harry back out of the chamber. Just as Harry and Keira walked out, Isabella tapped Hermione gently on the cheek, causing her to blink in surprise and look down at the black-haired girl.

Isabella looked slightly nervous but gave her a small, shy smile. Hermione would have smiled back but she gaped instead when Isabella hesitantly opened her mouth again, attempting to speak. For a couple of seconds, she seemed to struggle – her eyes flicking up desperately in fear to Hermione’s concerned brown orbs.

Finally, Hermione spoke up – redirecting her attention to her comforting gaze. “Isabella, it’s okay, sweetie...You don’t have to force yourself to talk again right now. You already saved me back there, I know you’re terrified—“

“Th—Th—Thank...You...”

“OH THANK MERLIN! OH THANK YOU SO MUCH!”

Harry stood off the far corner of Dumbledore’s office as she watched Regina sobbing into her daughter’s arms, her pale arms tight around the five-year-old’s small frame. Sirius was standing right beside her and had his arms around both of them, repeatedly planting kisses onto the top of Keira’s head in a gesture of relief and comfort.

Antonio Zabini was watching his family with a tight smile, fighting desperately to conceal his emotions as he tried to talk to Kingsley, Dumbledore and the other Aurors about the incident. Beside him, Blaise was holding his sister tightly to his chest while his sobbing mother hugged both of them, her face buried into her son's shoulder.

Harry noticed briefly that both Blaise and Draco had their school robes scorched slightly in several areas from dodged cursed and jinxes during the supposed 'diversion' posed by Finkleman's men in Hogsmeade and the Forbidden Forest.

The blonde Slytherin was standing off to the side with Hermione and the two Head students were conversing with the investigators and reporters of the Ministry. While Draco was talking to the reporters and reiterating the events that had happened to the ministry officials, Hermione was filling out the legal documents and papers involved in the entire incident, looking up every now and then to give Harry a comforting smile.

Harry barely managed to smile back, her eyes slightly misty as she watched the proceedings of everything around her as though she was caught up in the middle of a fast-paced dream. No one else seemed to notice her as she stood off to the side – hugging herself with both her arms as she tried to rub off the shivering in her body.

The rest of the Ministry officials ran in and out of the office in a frenzied rush while a crowd of Hogwarts students stood right outside the office entrance, whispering amongst themselves as to the events of the whole incident. Parker Finkleman and his two associates had already been apprehended about an hour ago and had been taken to Ministry headquarters for proceedings – after which they had been told they were to be sent directly to Azkaban.

As it turns out, everything they had heard down in the Chamber of Secrets had been true after all. Nigel Hammerstone and Vittoria de Luca had commissioned Parker's illegal services to kidnap both children that afternoon with separate motives. Hammerstone had simply wanted to secure custody of his daughter by proving Regina a reckless parent.

Vittoria, on the other hand, had wanted to sabotage Blaise's engagement to incorporate herself into the family in the hopes of stealing money. Apparently, Vittoria had also been the cause of Hammerstone and Regina's divorce – the Italian heiress had been working as his intern secretary for quite some time now and had been sleeping with the man ever since.

Finkleman had confessed to everything Harry and Hermione had witnessed – including Nigel Hammerstone and Vittoria de Luca's involvement in the entire kidnapping. Kingsley had already sent an entire horde of Aurors after the two aristocrats and they have been apprehended accordingly, taken directly to Ministry court for their attempts.

This is crazy...All this just for money. What is wrong with Wizarding elite society? Harry thought to herself in disgust as her eyes flicked back to Regina and Sirius. She winced as she watched Kingsley explaining the situation to the former prime debutante, watching as Regina's eyes clouded in tears of shock and dismay.

Turning away from the sight, she watched again as Blaise hugged Isabella tighter to him and dropped a comforting kiss onto the little girl's forehead. Hermione walked hesitantly up to them, stiffening when Blaise looked up sharply and met her gaze.

Then – in an unspoken exchange of words – the tension on the Italian heir's face gave way to a genuinely thankful smile and he pulled Hermione into their hug, wrapping the Gryffindor in his arms and giving both Hermione and Isabella a kiss on their cheeks.

Isabella giggled lightly and Harry had to smile to herself when she heard the little girl's beautiful, high-pitched voice for the first time. "Blaise, you're squishing us! And you're all sweaty! Ewww!" Blaise and Hermione both laughed but didn't pull away, their arms wrapping even tighter around each other in a gesture of silent comfort.

Feeling a heavy pang in her chest, Harry slowly shifted her green eyes away and turned back to her godfather. Sirius held Keira up in his arms and was now ushering Regina into their embrace, wrapping



both his arms around the slender woman and rubbing soothing circles on her back.

The former debutante was crying softly against his chest while Keira was frantically trying to console her mother by hugging her back as tight as her little arms could. The three of them made such a perfect family picture standing right next to Blaise and his parents that Harry felt a painful lump forming in her dry throat.

Holding back the tears of both happiness and sadness that were pooling in her eyes, she took a shaky step back away from the tender scenes and wrapped her arms tighter around herself. As her vision blurred, her eyes moved back and forth from the Zabinis to Sirius, Keira and Regina and the more she saw the happiness and relief radiating from both families, the more she felt like cowering away and shrinking into a tiny ball.

F—Family...I...I've never had one... She thought to herself as the tears finally began slipping from her eyes – unseen by everyone else around the room. Taking in a shuddering breath, she finally stopped when her back hit the entrance door behind her and she closed her eyes in an effort to control her emotions.

Draco saw this from where he stood across the office. He felt a raw ache in his chest, wanting nothing more than to walk over to her and pull her into his arms. Instead, he stood there helplessly as Harry seemed to walk further and further away from him.

Mum...Dad...I don't belong here...I should be out there protecting the ones I have left. I'm the only one who doesn't have a family anymore anyway. Harry thought to herself, a muffled sob escaping her lips as she clenched her eyes shut and buried her face into her hands.

Again, no one in the room seemed to notice her. Dumbledore and the other Aurors were now busy conversing hysterically with a bunch of Ministry officials and lawyers that had flooded in near the fireplace while Hermione had gone back to the reporters. Ashford was one of the officials who had suddenly flooded in – along with a handful of Aurors behind him.

The two reunited families remained by the center of the office and Harry continued to watch them with a sad, teary smile of admiration.

I want to spend the rest of my life making sure moments like these happen... She thought with a heavy feeling of realization flooding her chest. She looked up again and watched as Keira smiled and hugged her mother tightly to her, sighing contentedly when Regina nuzzled the hair on her head.

Harry allowed a small, sad smile – never noticing the look of grief that was beginning to flood Draco's eyes when he saw the decisive expression on her face. I want to make sure...More than anything...That no child is ever separated from his or her family again. She thought, sighing and clenching her hands into tight fists.

I want to make sure that no family will ever be separated again. No Dark Lords. No Death Eaters. It was the only reason I agreed to fight Voldemort in the first place. It's what I've lived my entire life for until now...Until...She looked up and found herself staring across the room right into Draco's eyes, biting her lip when she saw fear reflected in those silver orbs.

Until Draco.

She met his eyes easily – recalling in her mind all those times those eyes had looked at her with love, fondness and laughter. Now, however, they looked at her in growing anger and betrayal and the sight of them was breaking her very soul into two.

I had almost forgotten myself for you, Draco...She thought sadly, her eyes clouding over in tears once more when she saw the crestfallen look on Draco's handsome face.

I'm...I'm so sorry, Draco.

That was her last thought as Harry summoned every lingering amount of human strength she had left and forced herself forward, walking right past Draco's pale form and until she found herself standing directly behind Vincent Ashford.

The Head Unspeakable seemed to sense immediately that it was her standing behind him but he didn't turn around. Instead, he froze and remained exactly in his place – holding a hand up and indicating for the Aurors around him to keep quiet as he waited for her to speak.

“Yes, Potter...? Something you wish to say...?”

Ashford had spoken so loud that everyone in the room suddenly turned to face them until the murmurs disappeared and the entire office was dead silent. Harry didn't care about them however – all she cared about was the one pair of silver eyes that were slowly filling up with tears behind her.

The next words that came out her mouth would change her life forever.

“I...I'm going to Romania...Mr. Ashford.”

She heard Hermione's stricken gasp and Kingsley's loud exclamation of shock but nothing registered in her mind except for the heartbroken, crumpled expression on Draco's face. The Slytherin had turned around sharply to hide his face from the sudden gazes that flicked to him but he refused to move – intent on hearing what she had to say.

A couple more tears escaped her eyes as she looked back up into Ashford's face. She was surprised to see that for the first time since she had met him, there was a slight trace of sympathy there but otherwise, his steady voice rang firmly in her ears.

“...Are you sure you want to do this, Potter...?”

Harry didn't trust herself to look at Draco anymore as she answered, her voice coming out in a soft, breathless whisper.

“I—I'm sure.”

Ashford didn't say anything but simply nodded at her words, reaching a hand into his pocket and pulling out a clean white handkerchief. He surprised her further when he wordlessly offered it to her before

walking back towards Kingsley just as the conversations among the officials in the room began to start up again.

No one seemed willing to look at either Draco or Harry as they all scattered about – ministry officials flooding back to the Ministry and Aurors running out of the office towards the crime scene. Hermione attempted to reach Harry but Blaise grabbed her by the arm and gently ushered her outside with his family.

Sirius took the same hint and ushered Regina and Keira outside as well and they were immediately followed by several more people until only a handful of officials remained in the office – Dumbledore, Kingsley and Ashford included.

In the midst of all this, Draco continued to keep his back to Harry.

He fought to keep a hold on his emotions, his gaze focused intently on the walls. His eyes were misty with tears but he still refused to let them fall – heartbroken and humiliated all at once to let himself be seen in such a state by everyone in the room.

Harry, however, was having trouble controlling the sobs that were threatening to erupt from her. She walked right up to him and hesitantly placed a hand on his shoulder – only to gasp when Draco immediately flinched and stepped away from her as though in disgust and unfamiliarity.

She bit her lip as another tear fell from her eyes down to the floor but she took another step toward him anyway. “D—Draco...I’m...I’m—”

“You’re what?! You’re sorry?! Sorry for what?! For leading me on?!” He hissed and she gasped as he whirled around and clamped his hands down on her shoulders, squeezing painfully as he forced her to meet his harsh gaze. “For humiliating me like this?! For accepting to marry me for money and then leaving me hanging—”

“Draco,I never took the money...But this is something I have to do...I owe it to who I am! Please. I love you and I’ll understand if you can’t wait the two years—”

“This is over, Potter.”

The humiliated finality in his whispered voice shattered her heart but she respected him too much to deny him anything that moment so she bit her lip and choked down the rest of the words she wanted to say to him.

Ignoring the stares she knew they were receiving from the rest of the people around the room – a sad, observing Dumbledore included – Harry shot Draco one last look before she walked out of the large office and onto the empty, silent corridors outside.

She was immediately flanked by Ron and Hermione – followed by Blaise, Anton and Lorraine behind them but before she could answer any of their questions, the office entrance behind her swung open again. Blinking in shock, she caught the looks of confusion and the murmurs from their friends around them when she heard Draco’s voice call out softly to her.

“Harry...”

Whirling around, she saw Draco walking right out of the office toward her with a strange, unfamiliar look of childlike desperation in his eyes that she had never seen before. Another gasp escaped her lips when Draco collapsed onto the floor in front of her on his knees and buried his face into her midsection to hide his face.

Ron was taken completely by surprise and his jaw dropped open. Anton, Lorraine and Blaise seemed no better off, blinking at Draco in utter disbelief. Hermione had stepped back and was holding in a barrage of tears as she watched them but nothing compared to the stunned, broken expression on Harry’s pale face.

“D—Draco. Don’t do this! Please, get up—”

Draco’s shoulders were trembling and he tightened his arms around her, his voice muffled as he spoke just loud enough so that no one else but Harry could hear him.

“Harry...You know me...I have NEVER begged for anything before in my life. Yet, here I am on my knees begging you to stay with me. You know I can't wait for you. Please don't do this to us...” The helplessness and vulnerability in his words brought another violent wave of tears to Harry's green eyes.

“Draco, please don't...” She tried to force him back up but he stubbornly kept his position, his face hidden into her shirt such that she couldn't see the heartbroken expression on his face.

She struggled with him for a long time, fighting to pull him back up but he refused to move and neither of their friends offered to help them. In fact, they all seemed to be staring at them in complete, unmoving shock.

“Draco, get up. Don't do this.” Harry's voice was stronger now and she tried to force him to stand up again before any of the other students saw them but Draco simply refused to budge – latching onto her like a stubborn child who was being forced away from his mother.

His face was hidden against her shirt but Harry could tell from the shaking of his shoulders that he was crying and that realization alone brought a dagger twisting right through her chest. Finally deciding what she needed to do, she bottled up all the emotions that were threatening to burst from her and aching yanked his engagement ring off her finger.

Ignoring Hermione's admonishing protests, Harry steeled the remaining nerves she had left and finally knelt down in front of him – knowing Draco well enough that she took great care to hide his face from their friends so that they couldn't see his tear-streaked cheeks.

She discreetly kissed the offending tears away, looked directly into his wide eyes and forced her next words to come out firm and steady enough for the both of them.

“I'm so sorry, Draco...But like you said...I'm still me. I'm Harry Potter. I have to do this...I don't want to live my life with any regrets. This is who I am. I owe this to myself. I'm going after my dream.” She took the engagement ring in her hand and pressed it tightly against

Draco's palm, using her trembling fingers to close his around the beautiful diamond.

"Will you please wait for me...?"

Her last words seemed to echo Draco's ears and the pain and humiliation he was trying to suppress seemed to come down upon him like a powerful tidal wave. As though it had never happened, the anguish in his eyes disappeared and in its place was a chilling glint of anger and contempt.

Before Harry could even blink, Draco was on his feet in an instant. He shoved her roughly away from him in utter disgust, causing the Gryffindor to wince in pain as she fell back in a crumpled ball towards the cold, stone ground.

"Harry—"

One horrifying glare from Draco was all it took for Hermione to remain exactly in her place, unable to rush forward to help her best friend up. Unfortunately, Harry's reins on her own emotions seemed to be falling apart now as she struggled to hold her tears back amidst the familiar hateful sneer Draco was suddenly giving her.

"Draco—" Blaise tried to speak up but Draco seemed not to have heard it. The blonde Slytherin was smirking coldly to himself as he walked right up to one of the corridor's windows across from them, his cold eyes focused on the grassy fields outside.

Then – without saying a word – Draco sneered at Harry one last time before he hurled the beautiful diamond ring out the window, watching in sadistic amusement as it disappeared into the darkness of the night surrounding the castle.

Chuckling casually to himself as though nothing happened, the Malfoy heir gave them all one last indifferent smile before he turned and stalked off down the corridor, his school robes billowing out behind him as he disappeared round the corner.

The other teenagers stared after him in stunned silence – save for Harry whose haunted gaze was focused brokenly onto the direction Draco had thrown their engagement ring towards. As soon as Draco had gone, Blaise and Anton finally turned to Lorraine in question while Hermione had dropped down to the ground to gather a pale and shaking Harry into her arms.

For the first time in her life since she had thought Sirius had died – Harry buried her face into her hands, broke down into heart-wrenching sobs, and began to cry.

“Hey Potter! Want to eat breakfast with me this morning?”

From the far end of the Slytherin table, Draco found himself tiredly tearing his eyes away from the scene as his ex-fiancée walked into the Great Hall with Ron and Hermione that morning – looking just as heartbreakingly beautiful as the first time he had laid eyes on her.

As had been routine for those last few months of school following the public break-up of their engagement, a round of inappropriate comments and whistles followed Jaimee’s entrance into the Great Hall. The Gryffindor looked exhausted of this but she kept her face down and quietly walked over to her usual seat in the Gryffindor table.

She ignored all of the usual comments and public flirting directed at her and buried her face into her arms, slouching down in her seat. Ron and Hermione took the seat next to her and began to help themselves to some breakfast just as more students piled into the hall.

Ignoring the loud murmuring that he knew were once again about their well publicized broken engagement, Draco kept his eyes firmly on his uneaten plate of French toast and listened half-heartedly as Dumbledore suddenly stood up and began to make some announcements to the seventh years about their upcoming graduation next week.

It had been now been three months since Draco and Jaimee had broken up and still, the rumors and habitual whispering from their fellow schoolmates about what had really happened hadn’t stopped since then. Neither Draco nor Harry talked about what happened and



of course, their friends respected their privacy to keep their own mouths shut about the entire incident.

Around that same time frame, Blaise and Hermione had managed to finalize the terms of their engagement and were expected to marry some time next month – much to everyone's surprise and Draco's annoyance. In fact, the Zabini-Granger engagement had easily replaced the Malfoy-Potter engagement in the tabloids those past months.

Despite the fact that both Ron and Hermione had passed their Ministry qualifying exams with flying colors, Draco had deliberately broken off Ron and Lorraine's engagement by giving a 'gracious' account to Louis of how Ron had used the money Harry had apparently gotten from Lawrence in order to buy Lorraine her engagement ring.

Lorraine had been heartbroken when she found out and had hurled Ron's engagement ring right at his face before storming out of Hogwarts completely.

That was about two months ago and since then, Draco hadn't heard at all from his female cousin but from what Byron told him, Lorraine had locked herself up in her room and was refusing to tell anyone why she suddenly broke off her engagement to Ron despite her pregnant state. She especially hated Draco and deliberately ignored all the letters he sent her.

Sighing, Draco looked up from his plate just as Pansy and Daphne sat down beside him, followed by Blaise, Crabbe and Goyle. Neither of them spoke or did anything except for Pansy who smiled and linked her arm through Draco's, resting her cheek against his shoulder.

His housemates had been completely silent about the entire situation and had not questioned Draco about what happened. The more conniving ones – like Theodore Nott – had joined the ranks of the many bachelors who instantly started chasing after Jaimee the minute they saw her naked ring finger. Unfortunately for him, he

spent an entire week in the hospital wing for his efforts when Draco ordered both Crabbe and Goyle to beat the living hell out of him.

“...Congratulations to all the graduating seventh years this year! I know you’re all eager to leave these walls and start your new lives...”

Dumbledore’s voice faded in his head again as Draco found himself looking back towards the Gryffindor table and watching in disgust as a couple more festering seventh-year Hufflepuffs made their way towards Harry with wide smiles on their faces.

The Gryffindor was completely oblivious to their advances and simply stared at Dumbledore with a blank expression on her face, her green eyes looking weary and lifeless. Ron looked no better off beside her and was glaring at Draco with utmost contempt and hatred in his eyes, to which Draco responded to with a derogatory sneer and a very rude finger.

“...Since your graduation practice commences next week and you’ll be leaving this afternoon...Your teachers have requested that I announce all the academic awardees for this graduating batch this morning.” Dumbledore continued with a smile, causing a faint ripple of applause to erupt from the sea of students in the Hall.

Again, nothing seemed to enter Draco’s consciousness as he found himself leafing silently through the dozens of witch profiles his father had sent him that week in order for him to choose the next Malfoy heiress before his assigned deadline – next Friday.

Pansy                      Parkinson...Daphne                      Greengrass...Marietta Edgecombe...Draco scowled and shoved the stacks of profiles noisily back into his bag, rubbing his forehead in frustration. Since he and Harry broke up, Draco had been distributing his time evenly between a whole horde of different women – both inside and outside the confines of his bedroom.

In those past months, he had been seeing debutantes from Hogwarts, Beauxbatons, Durmstrang – hell, even Sapientia’s and women from other countries through his cousins’ suggestions but none – in every

single imaginable aspect – compared to Harry. Draco had never found himself clashing with so many female personalities before.

He hated quiet, submissive women – he found them boring and uninteresting. He hated loud, talkative women – he found them tactless and stupid. He hated women who were too sultry and seductive – he found them distasteful and slutty. Most of all, he hated women who praised the very ground he walked on – that angered him above anything else.

He knew his father was growing more and more frustrated with every rejected debutante profile Draco returned to him. His cousins – William and Reggie – were to be married that week and he was expected to marry the week after, right before he formally succeeded his father as the head of the Malfoy family.

Unfortunately, Draco hadn't talked to his family about anything that's happened.

His parents and grandparents had been absolutely furious with him. Byron – as well as his other cousins – had reacted pretty much the same way and had demanded to know the reason Draco had broken it off but he refused to answer them directly. He knew how much his entire family had grown unusually fond of the Gryffindor so their persistence only made Draco feel much worse.

He had told them that Harry hadn't been ready to commit to a marriage. To be perfectly honest with himself, he was more ashamed and humiliated than anything else and he couldn't bear talking to his father or his grandfather about the real reason he had broken up with Harry – especially since his grandfather had paid Harry to agree to the whole engagement in the first place.

Besides...He wouldn't give his grandfather the satisfaction of the truth.

Blinking himself out of his thoughts, Draco ignored the occasional smattering of applause around them as Dumbledore read the names of the Honor Graduates one by one from each house and reached for the next pile of profiles in front of him.

Olivia Peterson... Janine Winterbourne... Clarisse McAdams... Draco flicked through the individual profiles one by one in idle boredom, casting a single glance at their smiling photographs. All were beautiful, pureblooded and sophisticated young women but he just didn't want any of them.

Shaking his head at each one, he looked up just in time to see Ron lean over to whisper something to Harry a couple of tables away. The Gryffindor's eyes twinkled with amusement and she laughed – the beautiful, well-missed sound sending a knife ripping through Draco's chest when he heard it even from as far as his seat.

He and Harry haven't spoken to each other since the night of the kidnapping and had pretty much been avoiding each other's very existence since then.

These days, he saw Harry either in the Great Hall, Potions or in his DADA class with Sleewick – where all the other students watched them like a live social experiment waiting to explode. Interaction between the two of them, however, had been nothing but dead and as awkward as two strangers who had never even met before.

Draco's eyes dimmed as he realized that this would be their final breakfast in Hogwarts that day. The seventh years were scheduled to leave Hogwarts that afternoon since all their classes were done and all that was left was for the graduation ceremony itself.

That meant...Today would be the last time he saw Harry before graduation.

I'm going back to the Manor this afternoon...I'm never going to see her like this again. Draco thought silently to himself as Dumbledore finally moved on to the Gryffindor Honor Graduates and began calling off the names of the students out loud.

"Hermione Granger, Academic Awardee Rank 2 and Jaimee Potter, Academic Awardee Rank 3!"

Draco blinked as the hall broke out into another round of applause and both Harry and Hermione stood up to acknowledge it, smiling

and nodding at the other students in gratitude. Beside him, Blaise was smiling at Hermione and clapping the loudest among the other Slytherins, to which Pansy and Daphne both rolled their eyes at in irritation.

“Look! Ernie is hitting on Potter again!” Pansy hissed loudly to Daphne and Draco’s eyes flicked over to the scene as Ernie took Jaimee’s hand and planted a kiss onto the back of her palm.

Harry didn’t seem to appreciate the unwelcome gesture. She got her goblet of pumpkin juice and dumped it irritably right into his pants, causing the entire Hufflepuff table to burst into hearty laughter. Dumbledore sounded amused by this as he finally turned to the Slytherin table and began to read off the names of the Honor Graduates. Like Gryffindor – there were only two.

“Blaise Zabini, Academic Awardee Rank 5 and Draco Malfoy, Academic Awardee Rank 1 and Hogwarts’ very own Valedictorian for this year’s graduating batch!”

Draco rose up from his seat automatically after Blaise, nodding and smiling blankly as his housemates, along with the rest of the hall, burst into a round of loud cheering and catcalls. Most of the girls squealed and cheered his name loudly while the boys simply rolled their eyes as though unexpected and rewarded him with an obligatory round of applause.

From the Gryffindor table, he saw Harry looking at him and when she met his eyes, the corners of her lips lifted into a small, genuine smile towards him. The soft expression in her eyes spoke of admiration for him but Draco met it with another contemptuous sneer, his eyes narrowing at her until she sighed and looked away from him.

“Congratulations, Draco! Blaise! You’re both so wonderful!” Pansy squealed as she planted a both their cheeks. Again, Draco could only nod blankly at her as he sat back down and listened to the rest of Dumbledore’s announcements.

“Now...I hope you all have packed your belongings by now because the Hogwarts express is scheduled to pick up the seventh years by

2pm this afternoon. Don't forget! You are all to return Friday morning next week for your graduation practice." He paused and watched the eager smiles on all the seventh years' faces.

"You all know that your graduation will take place on Friday afternoon – March 29th. That will mark your final day here as Hogwarts students." Dumbledore finished with a sad, fond smile. A round of contrasting 'aws' and cheers filled the hall, causing the Headmaster to chuckle to himself.

"So for now, we wish you seventh years all the best with your upcoming new careers – and future marriages! Enjoy the rest of the morning everyone!" Dumbledore finished with one last smile before he sat back down and the hall resumed its normal activities.

All at once, another loud round of comments were fired across the room at Harry from all different directions.

"Hey Potter! You want to sit with me during the train ride?"

"Potter! I can help you carry your luggage on the way back!"

"Say... Jaimee! Can I sit with you on the train?!"

"Potter! Now that you're single again, will you go out with me this week?!"

"Jaimee, you're gorgeous—"

Draco simply refused to hear anymore of it.

He sneered angrily at the pitiful scene before he slammed his fist noisily against the table and rose sharply from his seat, causing his friends to jump and flinch in surprise. Casting one last look of disgust at Harry's stricken face, the Malfoy heir turned and stalked out of the Great Hall, slamming the door shut loudly behind him.

"Potter."

Later that afternoon aboard the Hogwarts Express, a slightly irritated Draco looked up from his book and found himself staring right into a familiar pair of beautiful, startled green eyes.

Blinking in surprise and nervousness, Harry accidentally dropped the bag she was carrying as she entered the otherwise empty train compartment. Her eyes darted around, widening when she noticed that no one else was with him.

“I—I’m sorry! I was under the impression that this compartment was empty—”

Draco scoffed derisively, sneering at her open stuttering and the way her cheeks had flushed in embarrassment. “There are loads of other empty compartments on the train, Potter. We’re the only batch onboard. Do you mind bugging off?” He drawled coldly, causing her cheeks to flush even darker when she heard the spite in his voice.

Nodding nervously, she quickly hoisted her shoulder bag back up onto her shoulder and grabbed her trunk. “O—of course! I—I’m sorry, Draco—”

Draco eyes instantly flashed and he glared at her, his jaw clenching in anger. “Don’t call me by my first name! You no longer have that privilege...Potter.” He snapped, sneering wider when Harry’s eyes widened and she looked taken back by his hostility.

“I’m sorry...Malfoy.” She began slowly, anger finally seeping into her eyes as she stood up straighter and glared at him with a hint of indignation. “I wasn’t aware that the right to respect from someone was a privilege to be earned.” She retorted sarcastically, shaking her head at him.

Draco glared at her, unable to say anything else as she sighed and finally turned to walk out of the compartment. Just as she had reached for the handle, Draco couldn’t prevent himself from speaking up again, the book in his hands automatically dropping back onto his lap.

“So...When’s the big day? I’m sure you’re excited...You’ll be leaving soon right? Excited to finally have a life, Potty?” He drawled nonchalantly, leaning back against his seat and stretching his legs out onto the floor in an exaggaratingly laidback gesture.

Harry froze and turned around slowly, her eyebrows rising higher up her forehead. She watched as Draco shot her a cold, mocking smile before he stretched out his arms against the seat’s armrests – reminding her of an image of an arrogant brat prince staring her down.

“Big day...?”

Draco scoffed and shook his head at her in derision. “Romania. When are you scheduled to leave? I hear you have a couple of escorts lined up this week before then, you must be pretty busy with all those men.” He drawled again, smirking when Harry’s cheeks colored in indignation.

“You know as well as I do that I leave March 30th. The day after graduation. As for escorts, I don’t know what you’re talking about. I’ll be staying over at Sirius’ place for the time being—”

“Ahh...Right. March 30th. I forgot. The day of my wedding. I’d invite you but I see that you wouldn’t be able to make it anyway.” He commented lightly, giving her another fake smile and failing to see the brief flash of pain that flickered in her eyes.

Forcing herself to nod at his words, Harry turned her face away so he couldn’t see the expression on her face. “C— Congratulations...Please send my regards to your family. To be honest, I’ve grown quite fond of them over the time I met them—”

“Oh I would, really but...” Draco smirked and picked up his book again, flipping through the pages. “You see, they’re actually quite relieved that I didn’t end up marrying you. I mean...You were such a disgrace! You were the biggest misfit they had ever seen, Potter! I can’t believe grandfather even bothered to shell out 500,000 galleons for you!” He exclaimed with a chuckle, raising an eyebrow when he saw the hurt and humiliation flooding Harry’s face.



“I—I didn’t mean to disgrace your family...I’m sorry—”

“It’s quite better this way. You go your own pathetic little path and I go mine. After all...You were never really supposed to be a woman anyway...right?” Draco looked back up and gave her one last charming smile, pointedly ignoring the way Harry was fighting desperately to keep a straight face.

“Y—Yes. I suppose you’re right. I—I’m sorry I hurt you—”

“Draco...? Is that you, love...?”

The smile on Draco’s face transformed into a sneer as Marietta Edgecombe peered coyly into the compartment, her perfectly styled blonde hair bouncing in front of Jaimee’s face as she entered. Looking up, Jaimee barely registered her shock before Marietta had shoved right past her and deposited herself comfortably on Draco’s lap.

Draco kept his eyes trained intently on the lack of emotional response from Jaimee’s face as Marietta flicked her hair over her shoulder and glared at the Gryffindor through long, curled lashes. Curling her lips into a disdainful sneer, she gave a scoff and turned away from Jaimee to rest her cheek against Draco’s shoulder.

“Ugh... What are you still doing here, Potter? Can’t you see that Draco and I want to be alone?” She mocked scornfully, opening her eyes halfway just enough to see Harry finally glance back up at them – a wide, somewhat practiced smile plastered on her face.

“O—Of course! I’m sorry, I’m intruding! I’ll go now, excuse me.”

Her eyes lingering on him, Draco was surprised to see that instead of anger he saw understanding in those deep green depths before she turned, grabbed her bags and walked right out of the compartment – probably out of his life.

As Marietta snuggled herself against him and began to rant on about how she was looking forward to spending more time with him that week, Draco continued to stare at the door in silence – wondering to

himself if that would be the last time he would ever get to talk to Jaimee again.

“Draco!”

Brushing off the floo powder and soot from his robes, Draco looked up from where he had flooed into one of the luxurious fireplaces of Malfoy Manor right into his mother’s beautiful, concerned features. Narcissa Malfoy looked immensely worried as she offered a delicate hand to her son, helping him stand back up.

“Mother...What’s wrong? Where’s father? I thought he’d welcome me back home—”

Narcissa shook her head firmly, taking one of his hands and squeezing them tightly in growing anxiousness. “H—He’s in his office, sweetie... He’s been there a long time now with Jacob Cartwright. There’s something wrong...” She let her voice trail off but Draco heard the worry in her tone.

Looking around the room and indicating distractedly for the house-elves to carry his trunk and luggage up to his room, Draco allowed his mother to lead him hastily to his father’s large office. “Where’s grandfather? I need to speak with him about something important—”

Narcissa shook her head and began ushering him forward in an almost frantic gesture. “Your grandfather and grandmother are off on their vacation, we have no way of contacting them. They should arrive tomorrow. Sweetie, go inside now please. Your father has been waiting for you to arrive—” Draco cut her off by squeezing her hand, giving the slender fingers a comforting kiss.

“Mother, calm down. I’m sure everything’s fine.” He reassured her, offering the blonde woman a smile before he turned and released her hand to begin walking slowly towards his father’s office.

Unfortunately, as he opened the large double doors, Draco began to feel a sickening feeling of dread and foreboding flooding his chest. This feeling was strengthened tenfold when he opened the doors and caught a glimpse of the scene that was waiting for him.

There – in the very center of the room – stood his father and Jacob Cartwright, Elisa's father. Lucius was standing behind his large desk, a grim expression on his face as he bent down to sign a laid out contract. Jacob was watching him and smiling gleefully, an intimidating Wizarding Lawyer present behind him.

Seated on one of the lush armchairs facing his father's desk was Elisa Cartwright – looking just as beautiful and sophisticated as ever – and the minute she saw him, she stood up slowly, the corners of her lips curling into a menacing sneer. Walking right up to her father, she crossed her arms over her chest and watched Draco hesitantly enter the room.

"Father, what is the meaning of this?!"

For the first time, Draco saw an unfamiliar look of helplessness on his father's face as Lucius indicated to the Elisa standing right behind Jacob Cartwright, cringing as he spoke.

"Draco...Meet your new fiancé."

A/N: That's enough drama for now! Phew...I know I ruined things pretty badly in this chapter so I just have to say – PLEASE DON'T HATE ME! :grovels on her bare knees: Don't hate Harry either! You'll understand a bit more why she did that in the next chapter.

The story is nearing its end! :sobs: I promise you all AGAIN that THINGS WILL WORK OUT. You have my word! :wink: Oh to those who are asking, I will NOT be writing about Unspeakable camp in this story or in the sequel. Sorry but that would completely stray away from the whole focus of this story – which is Draco and Harry's relationship. :wink:

Next Chapter: Harry and Sirius, Draco and Lawrence, Graduation, Graduation Ball

## Chapter 33 – Growing Up

Sirius smiled as he watched Harry walk slowly into the large office in Black Manor. His goddaughter was decked out fully in her graduation robes, a slightly hesitant look on her face as she held her arms out to him for him to see her attire.

“It’s missing something, Prongslet.”

Chuckling, the marauder walked over to her and handed her the final piece of her attire – her graduating hat. Harry laughed and took the hat from him, placing it carefully on top of head and whirling around to glance at her reflection in the nearby wall mirror.

“Wow..I can’t believe I’m graduating from Hogwarts...It’s been my home for seven years.” She murmured out loud, taking a deep breath as she adjusted her robes once more and inspected the beautiful Hogwarts crest imprinted onto the right side of her chest.

Sirius reached over and gently ruffled her hair. “Hey...This is your home, Harry. You know you’re always welcome here.” He told her firmly, looking slightly offended at her words.

Harry rolled her eyes at his reaction and smiled, giving her godfather a light punch to the shoulder. “You know what I mean.” She told him, sighing as she took the robes hat right back off her head and stared at it through the mirror.

“It just feels...weird to be graduating. I don’t feel any more mature than I’ve always been. It’s all I’ve been thinking about during practice this morning.” She mused to herself, watching through the mirror as Sirius gestured to some of the house-elves to start gathering their things for the ceremony.

Sensing her hesitation, the marauder paused midway and looked back up to inspect the solemn expression on Harry’s face. “I...I mean...I don’t know what to expect after all this.” She sighed and finally turned around, looking her godfather right in the eyes.

“Sirius...Can I ask you something...?” She bit her lip, waiting for his full attention before she continued. Sirius sighed and gestured for them to sit back onto the couch in the middle of the room, indicating once more to the waiting house-elves to go on ahead without them.

“What’s on your mind, Prongslet?” He asked her, watching as a dozen different emotions seemed to flit across Harry’s face. She bit her lip hesitantly before nodding and beginning to speak.

“Sirius...Did I...Did I do the right thing? Did I make a mistake...?”

The expression her face was peering up at him was so heartbreakingly fragile and trusting at that moment that Sirius knew immediately what she was talking about. Her eyes had looked so lost and conflicted that Sirius had to place his hand over hers to get her to blink herself out of it.

Taking a deep breath, he squeezed her fingers tightly and offered her a firm but consoling smile. “Harry...Listen to me very carefully, okay...?” He began, waiting until she nodded almost frantically as she looked up at him with intent, anxious green eyes.

Sirius chose his words carefully before speaking. “It is never a mistake to want a life of your own. It is never a mistake to be yourself and to refuse to let anyone make you into someone you’re not.” He told her firmly, watching the corners of her lips quirk gently into the ghost of a smile.

“Most of all...It is never...NEVER a mistake to want to live your life without any regrets. You’re right – you owe this to yourself. All your life, the Wizarding World has done nothing but dictate to you what you have to do. It turned you into the boy-who-lived, it turned you into its savior, it turned you into a woman and now, an heiress. You have nothing to be guilty about.” He finished, smiling when he saw a hint of strength finally coming back into her eyes.

She nodded slowly, squeezing his hand as she let his words sink into her brain. “You’re right, Sirius...I...I just wish the price of being who I am didn’t cost me so much...” She let her gaze flick back to the

newspaper on the coffee table in front of them, a familiar aching erupting in her chest.

Sirius' jaw clenched and he followed her gaze to the newspaper that morning, reading once more the inscription on the front page printed in big bold letters.

**MALFOY – CARTWRIGHT SURPRISE ENGAGEMENT! WEDDING DATE FINALIZED TO BE MARCH 30th!**

“He deserves that bitch, Harry. Don't let him bother you anymore—” Sirius tried to go on further but Harry raised her hand and shook her head firmly, cutting him right off.

“Please don't blame it all on Draco...If anything, this was my fault too. I should have told him the truth from the beginning.” She gave a derisive scoff and turned the newspaper over so she didn't have to see Draco and Elisa's picture on the very front page.

Sirius looked livid and he tried to rant on further. “Harry, what is wrong with you?! How can you keep defending that stuck-up, pompous brat?! It's obvious that he cares about nothing and no one but himself! You were right to break off your engagement—”

“Sirius, stop it.” Harry managed to murmur weakly but Sirius was having none of it and he grabbed the newspaper again, slamming it down onto the table to emphasize his point.

“Why do you keep defending him?! I don't understand—”

**“BECAUSE I LOVE HIM, DAMN IT!”**

At her angry, unexpected outburst, Sirius fell silent, staring and blinking at her in shock as Harry fought to recover herself. She took several deep breaths before looking back up at him, giving him a patient, firm look that held insight and experiences well beyond her age.

“Love...Is a decision, Sirius. It is unconditional. I chose to love Draco for everything he is. He's a bloody bastard. He's a jerk. He gets angry

all the time. He gets irrationally jealous and paranoid. He's selfish. He's conceited. He thinks the entire world revolves around him and he hurts me so damn much—" Harry's voice broke off and she looked away, trying to control the growing pain in her chest.

"—But I love him. That is my decision and I never go back on my decisions. So even if he's...marrying someone else to please his family...and he doesn't give a shit about me anymore...And even when I feel like bashing his bloody brains out and I feel like stomping on his head...Or even now when it hurts to even think about him...I still love him." She finished, causing Sirius to explode again.

"But that's ridiculous, Harry! You're being – you're being—"

Harry managed a weak, choked up laugh and nodded easily at his words.

"Stupid and completely foolish. I know...I hate it. But a Gryffindor never goes back on his—" She paused and gave Sirius a sheepish smile. "—or her words. I guess that's just how love works, huh?" She slowly took the newspaper into her hands again, folding it so that she could no longer see Draco's picture, before setting it down on the floor.

"It doesn't matter anymore..." She stood back up and pulled her godfather to his feet, meeting his frustrated growl with a forced, cheerful smile. "I'm graduating today and I'm not going to ruin it by thinking about Malfoy." She readjusted her hat and offered him another grin.

Sirius looked as though he was going to say something else on the matter but at her imploring look, he sighed and held the words back. Instead, he managed a weak smile and gave her an affectionate tap on the cheek.

"Speaking of graduation, I...uh...I realize you've got a graduation ball to attend tonight. Do you want me to set you up with a hot date?" He asked her teasingly, raising his eyebrows up and down but Harry groaned and laughed, taking her hat off and swatting him with it.

“Forget it, Sirius. I’m not going. I don’t have a reason to go there tonight and watch couples make out. Besides, you know what I’d much rather be doing?” She allowed him to place her hat back on her head just before the two of them started to make their way out of the office.

Sirius raised an eyebrow in silent query. “Oh yeah...? What’s that, Prongslet?” He paused briefly and gestured to the house-elves behind them to prepare the fireplace that would floo them back to Hogwarts for the ceremony.

Harry grinned up at him, a mischievous yet affectionate twinkle in her eye. “I want to spend my last night here in England...Cranking up some mischief around London with my family – my godfather.” She finished, looking up and meeting the similar affectionate smile on Sirius’ face.

The marauder looked slightly taken back by her words and he turned away sharply to hide his face. Harry hid a laugh as Sirius pretended to scratch his eye and gestured frantically for the house-elves to leave him alone when they crowded around him in concern.

When he finally looked back at her, he gave her a mock scowl which easily transformed into a roguish, teasing grin. “You know, kiddo...You’ve had one too many a drop of estrogen in you. You’re turning into such a sap. You’re just like your mother.” He commented and Harry protested loudly when he pulled her into a headlock.

“Hey, stop that! Sirius!” She growled and shoved him off, half-irritated and half-laughing as she tried to rearrange her robes and her hair. Sirius gave her another grin, offering her his arm before speaking. “Let’s go get you graduated, shall we? After which, I will take you to the best damn bar in London!” He winked, causing his goddaughter to groan and roll her eyes.

“I told you I am never drinking again.” Her voice dissolved into laughter as they both stepped into the fireplace and the house-elves threw in several pinches of floo powder, waving happily to Harry and shouting their congratulations.



None of them – not even Sirius – noticed the sad, faraway look that had clouded in Harry's bright green eyes for the briefest moment just before she disappeared off into the green flames towards Hogwarts, a cloud of dust left swimming in the air in her place.

“...And Draco Lucius Malfoy – this graduating batch's valedictorian!”

The entire Great Hall was filled with Hogwartian families when it erupted in loud, simultaneous applause that afternoon, followed by the Slytherin side of the room exploding in a round of excited cheering and yelling as Draco walked up to the stage and claimed his medal and diploma.

Lucius and Narcissa stood right behind him and were smiling proudly as Draco accepted the offered golden medal from Dumbledore's hands, bowing briefly in respect to the Headmaster before turning to hand the medal to his father.

From the watching crowd of Hogwarts graduates below, Jaimee watched with a sad smile on her face as Draco offered his father a grin and inclined his head downwards to allow the older Malfoy to place the medal around his son's neck. Narcissa reached over and gave her son a tearful hug and a kiss on the cheek, causing Draco to roll his eyes but otherwise return her hug.

Once Draco and his parents had climbed back down the stage and onto their respective seats in front of the Slytherin graduates several feet in front of Harry and the other Gryffindors, she looked up and managed to lock eyes with none other than Lawrence and Genevieve Malfoy.

Genevieve smiled warmly at her and waved, mouthing a silent 'congratulations' while Lawrence had simply inclined his head in respectful greeting – to which Harry responded to awkwardly and nodded back with a hesitant smile. Beside them, Byron, Anton and Lorraine waved cheerfully to Harry with warm smiles on their aristocratic faces.

Harry couldn't help returning their genuine smiles and waved back silently before turning back and listening to Dumbledore reading off

the final group of graduates to be introduced onstage – the Hufflepuffs – as well as their own academic awardees. Ron saw Harry's exchange with the Malfoys and leaned over to whisper something miserably into her ear.

"Lorraine looks beautiful today, doesn't she? God, I hate that bloody ferret with a passion. I can't believe he told all those lies about me—" Harry cut him off by placing a hand on his shoulder and turning back to Lorraine in an attempt to meet her eyes again.

"Ron...Just tell her the truth. Hopefully you can also tell her family that she isn't pregnant." She told him pointedly, waiting until Lorraine had met her eyes again before she smiled and gestured to Ron beside her. The female veela looked slightly hesitant at this but looked up and met Ron's eyes – both teenagers staring at each other with a mixture of longing and regret in both their eyes.

Once Dumbledore began to speak a little bit louder and the guests around them began to speak more amongst themselves, Ron turned back to whisper something to Harry again. "By the way mate...I never got to tell you congratulations." He said under his breath, clapping a hand on her shoulder and indicating to the award medal hanging from her neck.

Harry grinned back, nodding and meeting Ron's offered hand in their signature handshake. "Yeah...? Well congratulations yourself, Ron. I hear you'll be starting your job next week." She laughed when Ron grinned and gave her a conspiratorial wink.

"That I'll be, Harry. And I promise you that by the time you get back, I'll be in a higher up position already. My boss already likes me; she laughed hard at my jokes during my interview." He told her excitedly and Harry rolled her eyes at this, giving him a teasing smirk.

"She was probably just laughing at your bright red hair and freckles." She quipped and Ron glared at her and stuck out his tongue, causing her to hide her sniggers behind her hand when Dumbledore paused in the middle of the list for effect before continuing.

On her other side, a beaming Hermione with a similar medal hanging from her neck leaned over to whisper something to them. "Are you going to the graduation ball later Harry? Everyone's really excited about it." She asked curiously but Harry gave her a sad smile and shook her head.

"I'm afraid not, Hermione...Sirius and I will spend tonight roaming London for the last time before I leave. I'm sorry...You guys just tell me all about it when you drop me off at the train station alright..?" She asked them and at her words, both Ron and Hermione's eyes dimmed in realization.

"Are you serious?! You mean this is the last time we'll get to spend time with you before you leave...?" Ron asked in shock and hearing the sadness in his voice, Harry forced out a laugh and gave the redhead a playful punch to the shoulder.

"What are you guys talking about? We'll still see each other on Saturday morning when you drop me off...right? And we'll make up for lost time when I get back, I promise." She teased, leaning over and giving both her friends a tight hug.

Hermione looked slightly put out and sniffed, her brown eyes glaring at Harry from underneath her graduation hat. "I can't believe you're not even going to be here for my wedding, Harry! Now who am I going to have as my maid of honor?!" She sniffed again but Harry didn't even bother hiding the shudder that escaped her upon hearing Hermione's words.

Meeting Ron's smirk, Harry grinned and shook her head firmly in relief. "Wow...Uhm...Maid of honor? Heels, tacky pink gown and tripping down the aisle in said heels? No thank you, Hermione. Why don't you ask someone who actually thinks it's an honor to be a maid?" Harry teased at Ron had to hold back a snort of laughter at her quip.

Hermione couldn't prevent a laugh at Harry's description but before she could answer her, the other girl had spoken up again. "Now if you were offering me the position of best man, that would be a completely different story and I would actually consider staying for you." Harry

told her, winking again but Hermione instantly colored, shaking her head at the idea.

“I can’t make you best man, Harry! First of all, you’re a woman and second, Blaise already chose Draco to be his best ma—” Hermione snapped her mouth shut in horror as Ron turned and glared sharply at her to shut up, the both of them watching as all the blood drained out of Harry’s face.

“Oh Merlin, I’m so sorry Harry! That just slipped out, I—”

“It’s okay, Hermione. It was an honest mistake.” Harry murmured gently as she flicked her eyes back up and offered the brunette a small, consoling smile. Hermione still looked embarrassed and Ron continued to glare accusingly at her as Harry looked back up and let her gaze linger on Draco several seats away.

The Malfoy heir was seated beside his new fiancé – a stunning, sophisticated French debutante by the name of Elisa Cartwright. Her arm was wrapped snugly around his and she was smirking around the room with an air of arrogance around her that made even Pansy Parkinson shake her head and glare at her in disgust.

Draco hadn’t looked at Harry’s direction once – not even when she had walked up onstage to claim her award and diploma. She, however, had glanced at him several times and noted sadly to herself that she had never seen Draco look more handsome than he did that afternoon dressed in his Hogwarts graduating robes with his gleaming golden medal hanging from his neck.

It was probably the last time she would see him for two years – and undoubtedly the last time she would see him before he was married to that bitch – so she wanted to remember as many images and glances of him as she possibly could.

“Harry...?”

Blinking herself out of her thoughts, Harry forced herself to look back up and meet Ron’s comforting grin. The redhead had reached up and

clapped her gently on her shoulder, squeezing gently as though in silent reassurance.

Hermione had the same look on her other side, reaching over and taking Harry's hand into hers. "Harry...We know how much this program means to you. Since we won't be seeing you tonight...Well...We just want you to know that we support your decision all the way." She began uncertainly, looking up and meeting Ron's gaze.

Ron nodded and continued for her, directing Harry's attention back to his face. "Seven years, mate...Seven years of us being together. It'll be lonely without you for two years...But you better damn make sure that when you get back, you still remember everything you've learned in there." He warned in a low voice, finally earning a laugh from his black-haired best friend.

Feeling a slow warmth enveloping her at her best friends' words, she nodded and reached over to clasp both their hands in hers. "You guys are being too dramatic...I'll be fine. Those two years will go by before you know it." She promised them and she would have said more had Dumbledore finished the last of the graduates and the whole hall burst into another round of applause.

"Congratulations to all graduates this year! May I say that we are all so proud of you and of everything you have accomplished for this school!" He exclaimed cheerfully, earning another round of cheers from the seventh years as they acknowledged his praise.

He chuckled and continued, nodding to the Heads of Houses behind him to stand up and walk to the very center of the stage. "Now...Before we adjourn not only this ceremony but your time here as Hogwarts students—" A chorus of loud 'aws' followed that but the Headmaster continued.

"—we have one last award to give to a special someone today." He paused and met all their surprised, curious gazes, smiling in mysterious anticipation.

“Ladies and gentlemen... I am most honored here today to be able to present—for the first time in 50 years since Grindelwald and myself – a recipient of Hogwarts highest and most esteemed award – the Golden Badge!” Dumbledore paused when his announcement was met with several gasps and exclamations, followed by another round of applause.

Harry gave Ron and Hermione a confused look but both shrugged and turned back to Dumbledore as he continued to explain. “The golden badge award is awarded to a single student who has exceptionally exemplified the qualities of not one...but all four houses throughout his or her seven year stay here at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.” The students watching were holding their breaths in suspense as they waited for the rest of Dumbledore’s announcement.

“This year...Our Golden Badge awardee has exhibited all these and more.” Dumbledore smiled at the whispering crowd as he spoke on. “The outstanding loyalty and diligence of a Hufflepuff...The wit and clever mind of a Ravenclaw...The cunning determination and resourcefulness of a Slytherin...” The headmaster paused and looked at the students with a small amused twinkle in his bright blue eyes.

“And most of all...The strength, integrity and bravery of a true born Gryffindor by blood...and by heart.” He finally looked up and met a wide, startled pair of shocked emerald green eyes staring at him right in the middle of the Great Hall.

“Ladies and gentlemen...This year’s Golden Badge awardee... Harry James Potter!”

Harry was deaf to the loud screaming and cheering of her friends surrounding her as she stood up shakily and slowly made her way to the stage, her face blushing darker with every passing smile and ‘congratulations’ she met along the way from many of the Hogwarts guests and families. Ron and Hermione had jumped up from their seats, screamed and hugged her simultaneously, latching onto her until she got midway down the aisle.

She smiled as she was enveloped in numerous hugs from the Weasley family when she passed them – followed by Fleur and Mrs. Weasley kissing both her cheeks. Sirius had rushed up to her from where he sat and pulled her into a tight, bone-crushing hug, spinning her proudly around and causing her to laugh and bat him away.

As she walked up to the stage to where Dumbledore and her other professors were waiting, Harry noticed several more faces smiling and waving up at her in congratulations – Keira and Regina Vallehan, Seamus, Dean, Neville, Luna and Ginny. Anton, Lorraine and Byron nodded to her in congratulations as she passed them and Kingsley and some other Ministry officials seated by the very front followed that up with their own formal nods and greetings.

Looking over to the Slytherin side of the Great Hall, she blushed darker in embarrassment when she saw Blaise and surprisingly some of the other Slytherins she had met cheering along with the crowd. Crabbe and Goyle had looked as though they wanted to clap along but Draco glared sharply at them once and they smiled sheepishly, letting their hands drop back down to their laps.

Once she finally made it to the stage, Professor McGonagall rushed over and pulled her into a motherly hug – followed by Professor Flitwick and Professor Sprout. Snape merely sneered at her and inclined his head towards her once but Harry took that as something positive and laughed either way.

“Congratulations, Harry...” Dumbledore greeted her with a warm smile as he leaned over and pinned the golden badge right next to the Hogwarts crest on her robes. After he had done that, Harry had reached up and pulled the elderly Headmaster into a tight hug. Dumbledore was slightly surprised by this but otherwise chuckled and hugged her back.

“Th—Thank you for everything, sir...” She managed to murmur softly, trying to hold back her emotions. She laughed again when her Gryffindor friends – particularly Seamus, Dean, Fred and George – began to scream and cheer louder for her when she walked up to the center of the stage once more for the final blessing.

One by one, the Heads of the Hogwarts houses waved their wands over the golden badge pinned to her chest. The badge glowed brightly with each respective house's colors, magically forming itself into the House crest, before settling back to its original gold form. Once all four houses had finished, her golden badge now proudly displayed a small symbol of each house's animal – badger, eagle, snake, and lion – all four of them arranged in a circle around the Hogwarts school crest at the very center.

Blinking back the mistiness forming in her eyes, Harry grinned and nodded at the crowd of students once, blushing slightly when her friends began cheering for her to say a few words. Nodding her head, she stepped forward, raised her wand to her throat and said the only thing left she wanted to say.

"I—I'd just...I'd like to say thank you...To everyone who's been a part of my life during my seven years stay here at Hogwarts." She paused and looked around the room, her eyes resting on a silent blonde figure by the Slytherin table who was still refusing to look up and acknowledge her gaze.

"Hogwarts has been my home...And I'll never forget the people I've met here and everything I've learned. Thank you...and congratulations to everyone! We finally made it!" She finished her speech with a loud cheer that was instantly reciprocated. Laughing, she finally turned to walk back down the stage.

Just as she had made to step down the stage, the bottom of her heel snagged down lightly against the top step and she squeaked out loud, grasping onto the large Hogwarts banner to steady herself back on her feet. Unfortunately, the banner was dislodged by her weight and fluttered messily onto the crowd, accidentally covering several Hufflepuff students seated in front.

The crowd of watching families and students had seen this and burst out into heartfelt laughter – watching as the Hufflepuff students removed the banner from their heads and glared at Harry in slight admonishment. Harry blushed in embarrassment at this but laughed as well and continued back down onto the stage.



“S—Sorry guys! My bad...I’m still not used to heels!”

She never noticed the fond, involuntary laugh that had escaped Draco’s lips when he saw the adorably sheepish expression on her face. However, the minute he realized what he had done – his eyes widened and he tore his eyes away from her as though he had been stung, only to meet Elisa’s accusing glare.

Still slightly embarrassed by her klutzy display, Harry gave her professors one last apologetic grimace before she flitted off back to her seat. Ron and Hermione were laughing as she sat back down beside them and gave them both a childish raspberry in retaliation.

As soon as the students had resettled themselves, Harry glanced back in front and listened to the rest of Dumbledore’s concluding speech. From several seats away, Draco allowed himself a quick, discreet glance at her, the expression in his eyes filled with sadness and regret.

“...Before we send you off to the world as fully grown wizards and witches... We’d just like to say congratulations once again and we hope that you have learned well and lived well with us.” Dumbledore gave them all one last, sad smile, his eyes particularly lingering on Harry with a reserved fondness of a grandfather staring at his grandchild.

Harry took that very moment to glance around the room one last time – her gaze flicking from Seamus, Dean, Neville, Luna, Ron, Blaise, Hermione and finally Draco. She gave them all one last smile of farewell to which – except for Draco who ignored her – they easily returned with their own sad smile and nod, a multitude of unspoken words passing within those fleeting moments alone.

“...And so...Let us end this great, joyous occasion with our very own Hogwarts school song.” Dumbledore finally concluded, indicating for the entire Hall to rise up on their feet just as McGonagall flicked her wand and levitated the Hogwarts banner high up into the air.

“Feel free to sing it to any tune you like!”

Harry, Ron and Hermione all met each other's blank faces for a split second before bursting out laughing and cupping their hands around their mouths to sing along with the rest of their schoolmates their very unique and unorthodox school song.

"Hogwarts, Hogwarts, Hoggy Warty Hogwarts, teach us something, please!

Whether we be old and bald, or young with scabby knees,

Our heads could do with filling with some interesting stuff,

For now they're bare and full of air, dead flies and bits of fluff,

So teach us things worth knowing, bring back what we've forgot,

Just do your best, we'll do the rest, and learn until our brains all rot!"

As the song ended and all the Hogwarts students erupted into a deafening chorus of cheers, screaming and clapping, Harry bid her last farewell to both Ron and Hermione before finally walking over to where Sirius was waiting for her at the end of the hall.

With a sinking feeling in her heart, she glanced back at the Hogwarts Great Hall one last time and was surprised to see Draco looking right back at her from across the room, Elisa tugging impatiently on his arm beside him.

There was no more anger or contempt in his face as he stared at her – only bitter regret and emptiness. His eyes were lingering intently on Harry's face – almost as though he was trying to memorize her features for the last time.

He was the last person Harry saw that day as she turned around, took a deep, shaky breath and finally left Hogwarts – her one home for the last seven years of her life. As she reached the doors of the Great Hall, another loud, ecstatic cheer filled the room and about a hundred graduation hats were tossed up haphazardly into the air.

“Can I have this dance...?”

In the middle of all his cheering and inappropriate hooting with his Gryffindor friends and his brothers during the Hogwarts Graduation Ball that night, Ron stiffened when he heard the soft familiar voice. He whirled around and blinked in disbelief.

Lorraine stood right in front of him in a beautiful lavender gown, her long blonde hair let loose and falling down straight and simple – just like she knew he liked it. Ron stared at her in awe for a long time, never noticing that his friends and brothers had coughed and smirked behind him before walking away to leave the silent couple alone.

They stared each other for a long, awkward moment – Ron staring expectantly at her and Lorraine biting her lip and thinking of what to say. Shoving his hands into his dress robes’ pockets, Ron allowed himself to speak up first.

“Raine...What are you doing here...?” He asked softly, trailing his eyes back up and watching as Lorraine’s eyes clouded over slightly in hesitation. She took a deep breath before speaking, a light forced laugh escaping her lips.

“I...Uh...I actually came over here to...apologize...” She began uncertainly, flinching when Ron kept all the emotions in his face carefully guarded. Lorraine gulped at that, biting her lip and fiddling patiently with her hands.

“I obviously read you all wrong. I believed Draco when he made up all that rubbish about you and Harry using grandfather’s money. I—I’m sorry...I should have trusted you better.” She looked up again and waited until Ron nodded for her to continue before she spoke again.

“I—I finally spoke to grandfather about everything yesterday...He told me that Harry never took the money from him. Byron even confirmed it to me – apparently he was there when it happened.” She informed him slowly, blushing in humiliation when Ron gave her a pointed glare as if to say ‘I told you so’.

“Draco’s such a stupid prick! I should have never believed him. I—I shouldn’t have said all those mean things to you. I’m so sorry...” She didn’t know what else to say after that but thankfully, Ron seemed to take pity on her and he finally spoke – a small smirk playing on his lips.

“You’re not very good at this either are you, Raine...?” He teased and at once, Lorraine’s lips twitched into a gentle smile and her eyes stung slightly with tears of immense relief.

“Apparently not...A Malfoy isn’t really taught to apologize.” She kidded, laughing lightly when Ron smiled and finally pulled her to him in a tight embrace. They didn’t say anything else for a few more minutes until Ron slowly led her to the dance floor, swaying them to a slow, romantic song.

She closed her eyes and rested her cheek against his shoulder, sighing in utter contentment as he leaned down to plant a kiss onto her forehead. Within the next couple of moments, she spoke up again – directing his attention to the small, proud smile on her face.

“So...I hear you’re starting work next week. Congratulations Mr. Weasley.” She teased lightly, causing the redhead to laugh and nod in affirmation. “Yeah, I’ll be working directly under the Finance Department Head to learn the basics. I’m really excited...” He told her and she smiled at the expression on his face.

“I can see that...I’m so proud of you. I really am.” She told him, earning himself a genuine smile from him as he squeezed her gently before pausing to twirl around. Once he had caught her back in his arms, Lorraine chuckled again and raised her eyebrow at him.

“When did you learn how to dance properly?” She teased again but this time Ron smirked at her and shook his head at her implied words. “I’ve always known how to dance, Raine...I just did all those goofy moves for you during the debutante ball so I could make you laugh.” He admitted bluntly, causing her eyes to widen and blink in shock.

“Wh—What?!”

Ron laughed at the reaction on her face and to emphasize his point, he spun her around again into a graceful turn – causing the hem of her skirt to twirl dramatically along her ankles. As soon as he had caught her back into his arms, Lorraine scowled and gave him a weak punch to the arm.

“You bloody git! And here I thought all this time that you were this adorable, klutz with two left feet!” She mock growled but she ended up laughing when she saw the impish grin on his face. He shrugged and spun them effortlessly around a nearby couple before he spoke again.

“Hey if being clumsy works for you, I’d be glad to do it every single time.” He winked at her, causing the female veela to roll her eyes at his antics. “I suppose all those times you tripped and fell when you were talking with me? Those were all ‘purposely done’ too?” She asked curiously but this time Ron reddened and shook his head in response.

She raised both her eyebrows at him, a smirk flitting across her face as Ron reddened even more in obvious embarrassment.

“A—actually...Those times I really was making a complete arse of myself without any intention of doing so. I guess I was a bit smitten by you.” His last sentence caused her to groan loudly and roll her eyes, laughing as she made to swat him on the shoulder.

“Hmm...Now that we’re talking about this, is there anything else I should know about you? Any more...surprises...?” She asked in a flirtatious tone, raising a single eyebrow as she leaned in closer and pressed herself against his chest.

Ron’s grin widened at this and he wrapped his arms tighter around her waist, matching her flirtatious tone easily. “Now, what would you mean by that...? I’m not pregnant or anything, if that’s what you mean and I haven’t been telling anybody that either.” He joked and at this, Lorraine gave a half-exasperated, half-amused laugh and pushed him away.

“Ron! I thought we agreed not to talk about it like that—”

The Gryffindor was laughing as he ushered her back into his arms and began guiding her once more into a slow, easy waltz. “I was kidding. I’m kidding. Come on, I just think the entire situation is funny that’s all...Which reminds me...” His eyes dropped down to her stomach and he raised an eyebrow in suspicion.

“Aren’t your parents suspicious at all about you not showing yet? It’s been three months, I would think that—” Lorraine cringed and hesitated for a split second before she took his hand and guided it to her stomach, allowing him to feel the bulge hidden skillfully by the fabric of her gown.

The minute he realized this, Ron gaped and yanked his head away, looking up and blinking at her in speechless horror. “Wh—What?! B— But we haven’t even done it yet, how did you—”

She scoffed and waved his fear dismissively away, indicating to her wand in her purse. “I charmed it to look like that, silly! We’re fine, everyone still thinks you knocked me up and that I have to marry you.” She assured him but her words ignited a slight twinge of irritation in Ron’s eyes.

Shaking his head, he led them to one of the far, slightly more secluded corners of the dance floor and pulled away to stare at her confused face. “To be honest, I don’t see how that’s fine! In fact, I don’t understand why we just can’t tell them the truth already!” He blurted out, his voice rising slightly and causing several other dancers to glance at them in passing.

Lorraine colored in mild embarrassment when she saw the offended expression in his eyes but she nodded and allowed him to explain further. Ron sighed and ran a hand through his hair in frustration, a dozen thoughts flying into his head all at once.

“I—I want to do this the right way, Raine! I don’t want to keep lying to both your parents and mine about the reason we’re marrying each other. I want to tell them the truth!” He began uncertainly, oblivious to

how Lorraine's eyes had flown up over his shoulder and was now glaring warningly at two approaching figures behind them.

Unfortunately, Ron continued to rant on in growing agitation. "I want to tell them I love you! I want to tell them that I already have a job and that my career is on track! My new boss even tells me I may get promoted after a year if I show her that I can do as well on my job as I did on my test!"

Lorraine managed a smile at him before glaring warningly once more at the two approaching figures behind them. Ron sighed loudly and took both her hands in his, raising it up to his lips and giving both a tender kiss.

"I want to tell your family that I want nothing more than to give you the lifestyle of a princess! Nothing less than the one you deserve! And if your family doesn't believe that – or if that bloody ferret cousin of yours doesn't believe that – I will wait as long as I have to!" He finished angrily, his jaw clenched firmly in determination.

Unfortunately, as romantic and as sweet as Lorraine had found the whole gesture, she didn't quite give him the reaction he had been hoping for.

She looked right into his face, reached a hand up to cup his cheek – and laughed.

After a couple of minutes, however, the offended expression on Ron's face made her stop and she took a deep breath to calm herself. Ron had pulled away from her and was glaring at her in angry query, his eyes narrowed as though to demand an explanation.

"Malfoy, if you're making fun of everything I just said, then you're nothing but a stuck-up snob after all—"

Lorraine giggled again and waved her hands frantically for him to stop. Her cheeks were flushed in exhilaration as she gestured to the two smirking figures standing behind him.

"Yep...My family knows I'm not pregnant, Ron."

Seeing the smirk on her face, Ron's ears turned red and he followed her gaze – whirling around sharply to find similar amused smirks on Byron and Anton's faces. The two Malfoy sons had walked up behind him, each one carrying a cup of firewhiskey in each hand.

Ron felt his cheeks heat up as he stepped away from them and snapped his head back to give Lorraine an irritable glare. "What are they doing here?! You could have at least warned me they were listening to me ranting on back there like a—"

"—like a cheesy, drunken suitor?" Byron supplied for him, causing Anton to chuckle and Ron to redden even more at his quip.

Still flushing, he tore his gaze away from both men and turned back to meet Lorraine's sheepish smile. "Wait, if your family knows you're not pregnant, then why—" Instead of continuing his sentence, his eyes fell on her 'pregnant belly' and she grinned, shaking her head and whipping her wand out of her purse.

"I just wanted you to freak you out there for a second." She admitted guiltily, causing both Byron and Anton to burst out into sniggers again when Ron glared at her and watched as she deflated her baby bump with a simple flick of her wand.

"That was not funny."

Anton and Byron both exchanged glances, their lips twitching with poorly concealed laughter. Lorraine sighed and rolled her eyes at them, reaching up and wrapping her arms around Ron's neck. He was still scowling when she pulled him down to her, resting their foreheads together.

"I'm sorry, Ron...I really meant for it as a joke." She smiled and leaned closer to give him a kiss on the cheek, ignoring the scowl that was still on his face. "I told my family the truth yesterday...And about how I wanted to marry you." She began slowly but she stopped when Ron yanked himself out of her arms and glared suspiciously at the two Malfoy sons again.



“Is that why they’re here then? Are they here to chase me around again?! Because I can tell you, I’m ready for you this time!” He put on his best growl and pulled his wand out of his pocket, pointing it frantically at Byron and Anton’s amused, smirking faces.

“Ron—”

Ron snarled and pointed his wand directly at Anton’s face. “I know a couple of ice spells myself, you jerk! I’m marrying your sister whether you like it or not so you’re just going to have to live with that!” He walked right up to the other man as though in challenge but Anton merely blinked and gave Lorraine a questioning glare.

“Is he bloody high or something? What’s wrong with him?!” He snapped but Lorraine was in hysterics at this point – clutching her stomach as she fought to gain a modicum of control over her laughter. Byron sighed and managed to speak up, diverting Ron’s attention to his smirk.

“Relax, Weasley...We’re not here to chase you or hunt you down.” He told him calmly, raising a single finger and using it to point Ron’s wand back down. Ron looked at him carefully, noting the trace of amusement on the metamorphagus’ face.

Lorraine finally walked up to them and placed a hand on Ron’s shoulder, directing his face back to the smile on her face. She laced her fingers with his, giving the confused Gryffindor a kiss on the cheek. “Ron...It’s okay. They’re fine...In fact, they’re more than okay. They actually came here with me.” She told him, causing his eyebrows to shoot up into his hairline.

“What?! Are you serious?! Then—”

“I certainly hope you aren’t this much of a nutter when you meet Uncle Lucius and Grandfather.” Anton muttered loud enough for Ron to hear him but before the redhead could utter a retort, Byron interrupted them with another wide grin.

“We talked to Harry and Hermione this week. They told us everything you’ve been doing lately to earn our family’s approval – including how

you passed the Department of Finance and Inter-Magical Investments qualifying exam.” He began uncertainly and Ron blinked at him in slight surprise, pausing and waiting for him to continue.

Anton smirked and slung an arm over Lorraine’s shoulders. “Not to sound superficial but father only agreed to finalize the engagement when he heard that. I think it’s because he figured a personal contact within that important department in the ministry might actually do some good for our family.” He admitted and Ron laughed when he heard this.

“So somehow...You Malfoys still managed to look completely selfish and manipulative in this entire thing...?” He asked with a chuckle and both Anton and Byron returned this another smirk, shrugging nonchalantly.

“You should hear about how Lorraine actually managed to convince the rest of the family – especially Uncle Lucius – to marry a Weasley when they found out she wasn’t actually pregnant.” Byron quipped with a laugh, instantly earning himself a warning glare from his female cousin.

“Byron, leave it alone—”

“How did she?” Ron asked, genuinely curious. Byron grinned wider and waited until the band ended their last song and several dancers passed them before he answered him.

“She threw a tantrum.”

Lorraine blushed a deep rosy pink when the corners of Ron’s lips started tugging upwards into an amused smile. After several more seconds, he was laughing and pulling her against him in a tight, affectionate hug.

Anton continued, shaking his head at the memory. “She was throwing furniture all over the house and screaming her bloody lungs out. Mind you, she did all this in hostile form so it was much more violent. She threw an entire couch at Draco.” He sniggered at this and Ron

smirked widely, flicking his blue eyes back to Lorraine's sheepish smile.

He leaned down and pressed a brief kiss onto her lips, causing the other two watching Malfoys to cringe in disgust at the tender scene. "I guess Malfoys always do get what they want, huh...?" He teased lightly, causing Lorraine to laugh and nod her agreement.

"Yes, they do."

Ignoring the presence of the other two men, Ron reached into his pocket and pulled out the engagement ring he had gotten for her several months ago. At the sight of it, Lorraine's eyes dimmed in slight guilt and she made to pull away.

"Ron, I'm really sorry about the ring. I threw it at your face and I shouldn't have—"

"I already paid Harry back for it, Raine..." He told her, causing all three Malfoys to step back in surprise. He smiled at her, raising her hand and slipping the ring back comfortably onto her finger.

She struggled for something to say. "Y—You didn't have to do that! Draco was just being a complete jerk, it didn't matter!" She stammered but Ron held a hand up to indicate for her to stop and listen further to him.

Grinning, he raised her hand again and gave each finger a kiss. "I took the payment out of my first two salaries. It's alright, Raine...The ring is finally...legally...yours. There's no more room for suspicions or accusations in there." He kidded but before she answered him, Byron let out an inappropriate whistle.

"You were able to pay for a ring like that from your first two salaries? Mate, that must be one hell of a lucrative job." He commented and Ron shrugged and grinned at him, nodding his acknowledgement.

Lorraine was smiling widely as she wrapped her arms around Ron's neck and snuggled against his chest, sighing when he wrapped his arms around her waist. He was about to lead them back to the center

of the dance floor in a waltz when Anton broke their trance by speaking up in a low drawl.

“Hey Weasley...Now that I’m okay with you and my sister and all...Do you mind formally introducing me to your sister over there by the bar?” He asked with a chuckle, his blue eyes flicking over to the said redhead standing with the rest of Ron’s siblings.

Lorraine giggled while Ron stiffened, his eyes narrowing as he turned his icy gaze to Anton’s handsome, smirking face.

“Over my dead body!”

“Are you happy...?”

Hermione lifted her head from Blaise’s shoulder and looked up into his smiling face. He leaned down and rewarded her with a brief kiss on the lips, causing the Gryffindor to blush slightly but wrap her arms tighter around his neck.

She smiled at him when he pulled back, her eyes lingering around the beautifully decorated Great Hall as she listened to the soft, gentle jazz music coming from the band at the center of the room. Many Hogwartian couples were on the dance floor with them – sharing their last dance in the Great Hall before the ball ended and they left Hogwarts forever.

While the atmosphere was sad and fleeting, Hermione couldn’t have been happier and she wrapped her arms tighter around her fiancé, listening to the soft beating of his heart. “Of course I’m happy, silly. I’m getting married and I have the job of my dreams...I almost have everything I want. It would almost be perfect.” She murmured, causing Blaise to chuckle as he looked down and stared at her lovely features.

“Almost...?” He pretended to look offended until her cheeks tinged with a small hint of pink. Refusing to meet his eyes, she tried to divert his attention by talking about something else.

“My parents told me they really liked meeting you, you know...They’ve never met a real, live, traditional pureblood before.” She told him teasingly, causing him to laugh good-naturedly and wave the experience away.

“Well then I enjoyed their company too. They were charming and well...” He smirked to himself and shook his head. “Certainly more human than my parents have ever been, that’s for sure.” He corrected himself, causing the Gryffindor to laugh in mild agreement.

Once they both quieted back down, he twirled her around briefly before settling her back in his arms and swaying once more to the music. “Isabella is excited about you moving in the manor. She says she wants to help you plan the wedding and choose your dress.” He told her with a smile.

Hermione laughed and nodded at his words. “I’m just glad she’s recovering so quickly. She’s a very energetic child, I wish I could have had a sister just like her.” She responded but Blaise cringed and shook his head at her words.

“I didn’t. She was a bloody menace! She practically chased away all the girls I ever dated.” He told her irritably but Hermione simply smirked and raised a single eyebrow at him.

“Then perhaps I’d better thank her for keeping you sensibly away from all those bloody women.” She retorted with a scoff and hearing the derision in her voice, Blaise gave a mock growl and used his hold on her to tickle her in retaliation.

She giggled and struggled against him, trying in vain to push him away. Once both their laughter had died out, she sighed and leaned her head back against his shoulder – allowing him to lead them off to a darker corner of the dance floor amidst other slow-dancing couples.

After a couple moments of staring into her warm brown eyes, Blaise spoke up again – his voice soft and slightly curious.

“What’s missing, Hermione...?”

Caught by surprise, she raised her head and looked up at him. At the serious look he gave her, she sighed and shook her head again to dismiss the matter away. “I—It’s nothing, Blaise. It’s really not important. I just—” She stopped and bit her lip, trying to think of the right words to say.

Eventually, she saw the genuine smile that suddenly made its way to Blaise’s face as he reached a hand and tilted her chin up to meet his gaze. Once she was looking up at him, his eyes softened and he finally opened his mouth to answer her.

“I love you, Hermione.”

She was speechless as she stared at him, her vision immediately blurring with the tears. Blaise grinned at her predictable reaction and brushed her tears aside for her, using the same gesture to stroke her cheek.

A mischievous twinkle in his eyes, he chuckled and pulled her closer against him. “I’d appreciate it if you said it back, Granger.” He kidded, causing her to laugh tearfully, shake her head and punch him lightly on the arm.

“Y—you jerk! You did that on purpose to put me on the spot—”

He leaned forward and caught her lips in another sweet kiss, forcing her to stop mid-sentence and wrap her arms tighter around him. She kissed him back for a long time, her entire body melting completely in his arms.

Once they had both pulled back, Hermione smiled up at him, feeling the happiest and the most content she had ever felt in her life.

“Now I have everything I want...”

Blaise smiled back slowly at her as she reached up and stroked his cheek, bringing his face closer to hers so she could whisper something into his ear.

“I love you too.”

Staring out blankly into the vast, beautiful gardens of Malfoy Manor that very same night, Draco let out a heavy sigh before setting his fifth glass of bourbon back onto the balcony railing with a loud 'clank'.

Just behind him inside one of the manor's elegant sitting rooms, Elisa was propped up on a stool and was happily gushing to one of her tailors about the perfect wedding dress she wanted done – a sight Draco did not have the patience or the very stomach to withstand.

She had been trying to call him in and ask his opinion for the last forty five minutes but Draco had done nothing but snap at her and sign over and over again the numerous bills and receipts that came with Elisa's by-the-hour purchases for their wedding.

After his graduation earlier that day, his mother and father had gone to France for the evening for one of their weekly social gatherings – leaving Draco alone in the manor save for Elisa, her father and Draco's grandparents, who were both resting in the parlor upstairs.

He had originally intended to go to the Hogwarts Graduation Ball that very night but Elisa had demanded he stay with her tonight to go over more preparations for their wedding tomorrow. Draco would have refused but after considering the fact that the only tolerable companion he could hang out with during the ball was Blaise and Blaise would most probably be hanging all over Granger, he thought better of it.

To be honest with himself, the only reason he had intended to stay for the Ball was to see Harry one last time but the Gryffindor had already left the grounds with her godfather right after the graduation ceremony. It had taken all of Draco's self-control not to chase after her, cast all his pride away and plead for her to stay again.

Elisa Cartwright was just about proving herself to be Draco's absolute nightmare.

The first time he had met her, he had initially fallen for her because she shared the exact same color eyes as Harry did. Within the span

of that single week alone, however, Draco soon found out that their eyes were just about the only thing in common they had.

Harry's eyes had always been filled with warmth and laughter while Elisa's held nothing but a snotty arrogance and a manipulative gleam that especially glinted whenever she wanted something from him – most of the time money or jewelry.

Throughout the entire week, she had managed to turn just about every single person in the Malfoy household against her. Narcissa hated the girl with a passion, especially when Elisa contradicted all her initial plans for the wedding and started going off about her own designs without Narcissa's permission or knowledge.

She didn't particularly appeal to Lucius' good side as well – especially after she had made several inappropriate comments about the current Malfoy head in front of his wife. Needless to say, Narcissa certainly didn't like Elisa any better after having witnessed the younger woman hitting on her husband in front of her.

Lawrence pretty much ignored her very presence altogether – deeming her unworthy of his attention while Genevieve was slightly more subtle, keeping a tight-lipped, disapproving expression on her face whenever Elisa was around her.

Perhaps the person who hated her the most was Draco.

Not only did he feel like a walking bank account whenever he escorted her around London but the girl did nothing but grate on his nerves entirely. She would whine loudly whenever he was at least five minutes gone from her sight and she would parade him around her other debutante friends like he was a human trophy.

It drove him absolutely crazy.

A muscle twitching in his jaw, Draco poured himself another full glass of bourbon and downed the drink in a single gulp, slamming the glass right down onto the balcony railing once more. The bottle beside him was nearly half-empty by now and still he felt completely numb –



almost as if even alcohol no longer had the same effect on him anymore.

From inside, Draco could make out Elisa gesturing to him through the sliding glass doors. She was holding up another roll of expensive fabric for her wedding dress in silent question but Draco merely sneered at her and raised an eyebrow, clearly uninterested.

She sighed dramatically before giggling and waving the concern away, rewarding him with a flying kiss before she turned back to talk animatedly with the dressmaker. Draco looked disgusted at this, grabbing the bottle of bourbon and taking a long swig from it directly.

In the name of all things sacred, Draco didn't have a bloody idea how he could ever sleep with this woman to have children.

For days, she had been trying to sneak into his bedroom in the hopes of enticing him but thankfully, Draco was never in there. Those past couple of nights, he had done nothing but drink himself to sleep on one of the couches around the Manor – waking up the next day to a horrendous hangover and the sound of Elisa's nagging voice.

God...If marriage with that bitch is anything at all like this past week, I'm going to hang myself within a month. Draco thought angrily in disgust, his eyes narrowing as he turned around to the sound of Elisa's annoyingly sultry, teasing voice.

"Draco..? Could you come inside for a minute, darling? They want to make sure your tuxedo fits you now." She drawled lightly, walking up to him and wrapping her arms around him from behind, resting her chin against his shoulder.

He immediately pulled away from her, shoving her back and nearly falling over sideways in growing drunken stupor. Elisa took one look at him, noting his flushed cheeks and the nearly empty bottle of bourbon in his hand.

"Ugh...Draco, you smell like liquor! Again! Don't you have anything else better to do than drink like a miserable little loser?" She snapped haughtily at him, staring him down through perfectly curled eyelashes.

Draco managed a derisive scoff, giving her an angry sneer. "Don't you have anything better to do than being a superficial, nagging bitch?! Lay off, what do you want me to sign now?!" He snapped, yanking the bottle of bourbon away from her when she made to grab at it.

"Draco! We are getting married tomorrow and I expect more responsibility from you! You are going to be the Head of your family, you should understand that—"

"You forced this engagement, Cartwright! Frankly, I'd rather jump off this balcony than to ever be with you again!" He hissed at her and he would have shoved her away had the bottle slipped from his hand and crashed noisily to the floor.

Elisa gave him a disgusted sneer, shaking her head when Draco seemed to blink at the broken bottle in a confused daze. "Look at you...You're wasted." She rolled her eyes and gestured to the approaching witch behind her, taking the offered parchment in her hands.

"Anyway...Sweetie..." The sneer on her face disappeared back into a sweet, accommodating smile as she offered him the account to be signed. "I just need you to sign this last thing for the caterers tomorrow. It's to make sure they serve only the best quality wine for the reception. Can't have my friends looking down on me can we?" She gave him another sugary sweet smile, looking up at him with an expectant expression.

Draco sighed but didn't bother refusing her as he took the documents in his hands, signing his name on each one. As soon as he had finished, she squealed and leaned over to plant a kiss on his cheek before walking back into the room, leaving him blinking at her in deadpan nonchalance.

As soon as she had gone back inside, Draco slumped back against the balcony railing and looked out onto the gardens in thoughtful silence, wondering once more how he had managed to back himself into such a situation in the first place.

Elisa had managed to manipulate him in the most unexpected way possible – by using his own words against him. It was a well known fact among the British Wizarding Elite that the reason the Malfoy family was one of the most prestigious families in the world was that they always kept their word to the very end.

Unfortunately for Draco, he hadn't been aware that Elisa had been informed of this arrangement and had brought with her that day she visited him in the Quidditch pitch – a lawyer to note down their little exchange. Apparently, her lawyer had marked Draco's carelessly spoken words down as an actual contract.

Given the Malfoy family's long-standing reputation of well-kept traditions and practices, Elisa and her father had threatened Lucius with taking the entire matter to the Wizengamot and soiling the Malfoy family name with the fact that Draco had backed out from a 'formal agreement'. Of course, the head of the family couldn't have anything staining the family's reputation.

Both Draco and Lucius had signed the engagement contract that very same day Draco had arrived from Hogwarts. Since then, Draco had spent the remainder of the week hoping to drink himself into his own oblivion.

"Draco! Darling! They want us to pick out some jewelry to wear for the reception!"

He winced upon hearing Elisa's sultry voice once more, wishing more than anything that he hadn't broken his bottle of bourbon and was drowning himself in it right at that moment. Instead, he carefully slipped himself down the balcony stairs towards the gardens before she could notice; glancing behind him every now and then to make sure she was still busy with the dressmakers.

Once his feet touched the grass, he took a deep breath of fresh air and looked around him in thoughtful silence. Shoving his hands into his pockets, he sighed and made his way through the hedge maze towards the very center of the garden. Glancing idly around his

beautiful surroundings, he felt a peaceful feeling of calmness envelope him.

The gardens in the Malfoy Manor estate in England were perhaps one of the most beautifully acclaimed gardens in Wizarding Europe. His grandmother had been the one who had initially decorated the gardens around thirty years ago and since then, Draco had remembered spending a lot of his childhood roaming through it whenever he was upset or needed some time alone.

Harry would probably have loved it in here... He thought to himself sadly, reaching up and stroking a beautiful rose as he walked past it and rounded another corridor through the maze.

He had been there so many times that he knew every twist and corner of the maze and it didn't take him long before he found the center of the garden where a large, beautiful marble fountain stood right in the middle of a pool of small, crystal pebbles.

Feeling slightly better off than he had in months, Draco was just about to walk towards one of the white stone benches situated near the fountain when a familiar voice spoke up, causing him to freeze right in his tracks.

"You smell like a drunkard."

Holding back a sudden wave of irritation, Draco whirled around sharply and found himself staring right into the cold, blank face of Lawrence Malfoy. The older aristocrat was standing just a couple of feet away from him, a small pipe held in his hands.

Lawrence was leaning casually against one of the maze's hedges and was looking up at the manor in thoughtful silence, pausing every now and then to take a whiff of his pipe. Draco instantly stiffened at his grandfather's presence and was about to bow himself out when Lawrence turned to him again and gestured to one of the nearby stone benches.

"Sit down, Draco."

His hands clenching into tight fists, Draco did as he was told and sat down stiffly onto the cold bench, looking up and waiting for his grandfather to speak first. The man didn't oblige, however, and continued to stare off at the manor in silence, his eyes lingering on the very balcony Draco had been looking out on for the past hour.

"Your future wife...She's a dime a dozen isn't she?" He drawled lightly, turning around and raising an aristocratic eyebrow at the younger man. Draco's jaw tightened at the sarcastic tone but he nodded, his face burning with the humiliation of knowing his grandfather was just about to lecture him about something – and he wasn't sure exactly what that was.

Lawrence ignored him and chuckled, taking another whiff of his pipe. "You know what I've always found interesting, Draco...?" He paused for a moment but didn't wait for Draco to answer him before he continued again.

"I've never liked that expression. A dime a dozen... Just doesn't quite cut it for me." He chuckled and gestured to a single lily hanging off one of the hedges behind Draco. The beautiful flower had somehow managed to grow its way out of an entire horde of roses surrounding it – easily making it stand out among the rest.

Draco's eyes narrowed slightly in confusion. He looked up and saw the unreadable expression on his grandfather's face. "You're a Malfoy, Draco." He looked at him, equally silver eyes piercing right through Draco's. "You can afford to buy yourself millions of women who are a dime a dozen." He drawled, sneering and scoffing at the very idea.

"Malfoys, however, deserve the best...The most exquisite, the most unique and the rarest gem we're lucky enough to find." At this, Lawrence finally allowed a shadow of disappointment to seep into his eyes and Draco cowered away – realizing with shock that he was on the receiving end of his grandfather's disappointment for the first time in his life.

"You have always been my favorite grandson, Draco."

Draco had to scoff derisively at this, turning his gaze away so his grandfather couldn't see the disbelief seen clearly in his features. "Yeah right...I think you mean the one you ladled the pressure on the most." He drawled scornfully, causing Lawrence to blink in mild surprise.

"Pressure?" The elder Malfoy looked slightly amused as Draco looked back up at him with anger flashing in his eyes.

"It was always about perfection for you! I had to be perfect in everything I do! I literally accomplished just about everything I could until I felt I would nearly explode! It was never enough for you, grandfather!" He blurted out and at this, Lawrence smirked and shook his head.

"You ladled that pressure onto yourself, Draco. You compete so hard against everyone else around you even when they're not trying to compete with you. You are such a child." He answered nonchalantly and the mockery in his words brought Draco to his feet, his face flushing in anger.

"Did you come here to lecture me?! How about you?! You interfered with my life and you went to Hogwarts and bought my wife for me?! That Potter was nothing but a deceitful slut who—"

Lawrence's eyes finally hardened and he stepped towards him, glaring the younger man down easily. "Like I said, Draco...You have always been my favorite grandson and I have always been proud of you—" He stopped when Draco exploded again, nearly tearing his hair out in frustration.

"What do you want me to say, grandfather—"

"—until now."

His grandfather's last two words made Draco's mouth snap shut. He stared at his grandfather in both anger and confusion, his eyebrows rising up to his forehead until they had nearly disappeared into his scalp. Lawrence stared back calmly at him, igniting his pipe once

more with his wand and taking another long inhale of smoke before speaking.

“She never took the money from me, Draco.”

“.....”

Draco had to blink a couple of times to process his grandfather's words and even after a couple of minutes, he still couldn't think of anything eloquent or intelligent to say.

“Wh—What?”

Lawrence looked at him and gave him a derogatory sneer, shaking his head in disappointment when he saw the look of dismay and heartbroken regret that suddenly began to flood his grandson's normally stoic face.

“She never took the money. In fact, I am more than appalled to say that she hurled my generous little offer right back at my face.” He smirked at the memory just as Draco backed away slowly and collapsed weakly back onto the bench.

“Sh—She didn't take the money...?”

Lawrence scoffed at his broken voice, turning to give him a cold, disapproving glare. “I'm sorry to say this, Draco...Especially since you're my grandson but you have been acting like a complete and total FOOL. I have never called you a screw-up before until now.” He stopped when he noticed the horrible guilt and self-loathing that was written all over Draco's ashen face.

“Oh—oh god...I—I'm so sorry...Oh god...”

“You need a lesson in humility, Draco.”

Hearing the horrible, familiar line, Draco looked up with wide, horrified eyes as Lawrence raised a single eyebrow at him once before letting his eyes travel pointedly to the pool of small, sharp crystal pebbles gathered around the fountain.

Draco felt his face flush in added injury and humiliation. He stood up, shaking his head in stubborn refusal. "Grandfather, I—"

Lawrence didn't say anything but simply glared at his trembling grandson, sneering coldly with a silent threat in his eyes that warned the Malfoy heir that refusal of his punishment would earn him something much more worse.

His face burning with humiliation and his entire body heavy with self-disgust and guilt, Draco stood up hesitantly and walked a couple of feet in front of the marble fountain. Then, tensing in anticipation, he shut his eyes, rolled up his pants to his knees and sank down in a kneeling position onto the sharp, crystal pebbles.

Draco tried not to cringe as the sharp pebbles cut painfully onto the skin of his knees, his mind filled with the familiar memories of him, Byron, Anton, Reggie and William kneeling in front of this very fountain when they were five years old. He had sworn to himself that he would never make another mistake so that Grandfather would never have to make him kneel on these rocks again.

This was the first time he had kneeled like this in twelve years.

Lawrence simply looked bored with this as he sat back down on the bench Draco had vacated and lazily checked his watch. Looking back up and watching as Draco struggled to hide the pain from showing on his face, Lawrence smirked coldly and shook his head.

"A future Head of the Malfoy family is not STUPID or WEAK! What have you been doing to yourself these past few months, Draco Lucius Malfoy?!" He hissed angrily and Draco flinched at the anger in his voice, opening his eyes and meeting the other man's harsh gaze.

"I—I'm sorry, grandfather—"

Despite himself, Lawrence heard the miserable regret in Draco's shaky voice and he sighed in frustration, setting his pipe down and lowering his voice to a calm drawl.



“If you do not want to get married to that woman up there, why did you do all this?”

Draco shook his head frantically, opening his eyes and looking up desperately into his grandfather’s harsh but comforting gaze.

“I...I did this for the family! For tradition! If I didn’t agree to Elisa, she’d have smeared our family’s reputation all over the ground! Besides...H—Harry is leaving for Romania tomorrow and I need to marry by tomorrow right?!” His voice broke several times but Lawrence merely looked at him in disgust, shaking his head at the sight.

“You did those things for yourself! Not the family! You’ve been using that as an excuse, you pathetic child!” He raged and at this, Draco paled at his words, blinking as they registered into his head and he processed their meaning carefully.

Sighing, Lawrence looked exhausted and let his gaze linger briefly on the wedding band around his own finger before he sighed and looked back up to meet Draco’s uncertain eyes.

“Draco...Do you know why we keep such strict traditions regarding marriage and children...? Do you understand why they’re important? Especially for the Malfoy heir?” He watched as Draco’s eyes clouded over in confusion once more and he frantically nodded his head.

“Of course I do! What do you think this has been all about—”

Lawrence stood up slowly, extinguishing his pipe and finally placing it back into his robes.

“They’re important...Because they force the Malfoy heir from a little boy into a man who understands the responsibilities he has to bear and the important decisions he has to start making for himself from now on.” He explained carefully, waiting for a few moments for Draco to register his words before he continued.

“For him to take on a wife and to start thinking of children is something that normally forces him to grow up. That’s why we’ve

been keeping such a tradition alive until now, regardless of the fact that many pureblooded families have disregarded it altogether.” He smirked when Draco blinked at him, clearly still not understanding what he was trying to say.

“I don’t understand—”

“However...Should circumstances show otherwise...And say, that these traditions are what the Malfoy heir actually holds onto to remain a child...Well then, I believe that’s a different matter altogether.” He finished, his smirk growing when Draco’s eyes finally widened in realization.

The Malfoy heir barely registered the agonizing pain in his knees now as he stared up at his grandfather’s face, surprised when he saw a look of amusement clearly dancing in those older pair of silver eyes. “G—grandfather...Do you mean—”

“I think it’s time you grew up, Draco.”

For one very brief moment, Draco almost missed the slight quirk of his grandfather’s lips into a slight smile before the older Malfoy had stood up and had turned to walk back inside the manor. Before he turned the maze corner, he stopped and turned back to look at Draco still kneeling on the pebbles in silence, his eyes staring off into empty space in deep thought.

“Whatever you decide to do in that church tomorrow, Draco...You have my support.”

Draco couldn’t find the voice to speak as he looked up into his grandfather’s blank face, a small, genuine smile finally making its way onto his face for the first time in months.

“I understand. Thank you...Grandfather.”

The other man simply smirked again and indicated lazily to the pool of crystal pebbles Draco was still kneeling on.

“Oh...And you’re not to stand for another thirty minutes.”

The smile on Draco's face dissolved into a helpless, disbelieving chuckle as Lawrence Malfoy finally turned and disappeared round the corner back towards the Manor, leaving the Malfoy heir lost in his own deep thoughts.

I am so sorry I ever doubted you, Harry...I am so goddamn sorry.

A/N: Weeee! Adrenaline rush! Draco's finally realized what a jerk he's been! Is it too late or will things be alright in time? (Well obviously you know the answer to that! Haha.) What do you think is going to happen?! Hmm! You'll have to wait and see! The next chapter is the chapter everyone has been waiting for!

If any of you are curious, I am writing the end of this story so as to coincide with the situation and events (work, characters, etc.) I will be using in the story's upcoming sequel. I'll post more information about it in my profile page soon if any of you are interested in checking it out.

Next Chapter: Draco's Wedding (dun-dun-dun!), Harry leaves for Romania

PLEASE LEAVE A REVIEW! CHEERS!

## Chapter 34 – The Might of the Malfoy Family

“As your chosen best man, this is usually the part where I start trying to console you about marriage, commitment and all that rubbish.” Blaise kidded lightly as he faced his agitated best friend the very next day. The two graduate Slytherins were standing in front of a wide, full-length mirror in one of the church’s back rooms just thirty minutes away from Draco’s wedding to Elisa.

Draco didn’t say anything as he stared silently at his reflection in the mirror, one hand distractedly reaching up to fix his hair perfectly into place with just a hint of hair wax. Behind him, a couple of house-elves were fussing over any lingering wrinkles on his wedding tux and were checking to make sure the Malfoy heir looked nothing less than immaculate.

Blaise watched him in calculating silence, noting the tense clenching of his best friend’s jaw and the way Draco’s eyes were flicking every five seconds to the silver wristwatch attached to his wrist. The blonde seemed not to have heard a single word that Blaise had said and began focusing all his energy into readjusting his tuxedo sleeves.

Peering outside the slightly ajar door behind him, the Italian heir noted the massive crowd of guests seated along the seats of the chapel. The entire high class elite of Wizarding Britain – all esteemed pureblooded heads and their families – were present; along with a horde of excited photographers and gossip columnists for the Wizarding tabloids.

Draco’s entire family, save for Byron, was seated at the first two rows of seats near the front of the chapel and at the very center sat Lucius and Narcissa, the current Head and Mistress of the Malfoy family. Just beside them sat Lawrence and Genevieve and behind them was a whole class of silver-blond Malfoys who were impatiently waiting for the wedding to begin.

Elisa’s parents and her relatives sat on the seats opposite the Malfoy family and to Blaise’s amusement, neither of the Malfoy relatives seemed too pleased with this and were refusing any form of civil contact with the Cartwrights in any possible way whatsoever.

The elegant church was decorated with beautiful silk and lace all around the wedding aisle while the dome-like ceiling was enchanted to reflect the clear blue skies outside. Also present among the esteemed guests were the Zabini's, the Parkinsons, Albus Dumbledore, Severus Snape, and Cornelius Fudge, the Minister of Magic. Seated behind them were most of Draco's Hogwarts teachers and just off to the side of them sat an entire row of Elisa's debutante friends – all of which were giggling and whispering excitedly to themselves about the would-be proceedings of the wedding.

Also among the guests were Draco's friends among high pureblood society – the heirs of all top wizarding families. Even the Winchesters had been invited out of necessary courtesy, though there was a rather evident disdainful scowl Philippe and his father were aiming towards Lorraine and Louis.

Since the wedding church they had chosen was known as the biggest one in London, about more than half of Hogwarts' graduated batch was also present for the event and were seated at the very end. Evidently, this made the Malfoy wedding – incidentally the first wedding of the season – one of the biggest weddings the Wizarding World had ever seen in ten years.

Given the high status and ranks of about more than half the occupants of the church that morning, the hired security around the church against muggles and unwelcome intruders was particularly fierce and Aurors were scouring the entire place in keen observation from where they stood guard just by the church's gigantic double doors.

Blinking and clearing his throat loudly several times, Blaise spoke up in an attempt to divert Draco's attention. "Draco...You'll be needed out there soon. If you're going to back out of this entire thing, mate...Now would be the best time. The Aurors are just about to close those church doors." He kidded lightly though his suggestion wasn't entirely meant as a joke.

He watched as Draco's face paled even more and he looked up at him, looking more nervous than Blaise had ever seen him before in his life. "Draco...Are you sure about this? You don't look too good. I think you should sit down." He indicated to the chair just behind him, leading the blonde over to it and helping him sit back down.

Draco managed a weak laugh and nodded in gratitude. "Th—thanks, Blaise...I'm just a little nervous. I guess I've only just realized now how much this will have an impact on my entire life." He admitted, watching as the house-elves bowed to him once before silently scurrying out of the dressing room towards the bridal chambers.

Without realizing it, Draco's eyes flicked over to his watch again, oblivious to the look of amusement that crossed Blaise's face. When the Malfoy heir saw his best friend's smirk, he cursed loudly to himself and flushed in embarrassment.

Blaise finally sat down beside him and offered him a knowing smirk. "You can still catch her at the train station you know...It's not too late. Byron told me their train will be leaving at 10am." He told him softly and at this, Draco's head shot up and he gave him an angry, embarrassed glare.

"I—I wasn't thinking about her! I—I don't even know what you're talking about!" He barked out instantly, causing his best friend to roll his eyes as he reached over to a nearby pitcher of water and poured the other man a tall glass.

"W—Well then relax, Draco...This is your wedding day. And there are hundreds of people out there waiting for you – including your family." Blaise reminded him as he offered him the glass of water, waiting until Draco took a long swig before helping him set it back down.

The blonde looked slightly calmer after that but that still didn't stop him from peering at his watch again and noting that it was exactly eighty minutes before he knew Jaimee would be getting on that express train to Romania and leaving England for good.

That fact didn't seem to make him feel any better at all.

Again Blaise saw this but instead of saying anything, he stood up and made to walk out of the room to leave the blonde to his own musings. Just before he grabbed the door's handle, he turned around again and gave Draco a small, knowing smile.

"I think I'd better check on the bridesmaids. I'll signal you when the ceremony's about to start and you're ready to come out." He told him carefully, waiting until Draco looked up and gave him a grateful nod before he walked out of the room.

Once he was alone, Draco sighed and raised his wand – pointing it at the door to shut it close and lock him in his own tormented thoughts. The silence was strangely deafening as he took another sip of water before inhaling a deep breath of air.

What are you doing here, Malfoy...?!

He shut his eyes when he heard the loud mocking voice in his head, trying to block the words right out. Unfortunately, the familiar feelings of guilt and regret it ignited within him began flooding his chest again until his grandfather's words reverberated in his ears.

"Malfoys, however, deserve the best...The most exquisite, the most unique and the rarest gem we're lucky enough to find."

Draco recalled the hidden fondness that he had seen warming his grandfather's eyes when he had spoken those words, no doubt thinking of Draco's grandmother and how much their relationship has strengthened over the many years they've been married.

He knew exactly what his grandfather had been trying to tell him that night. In fact, he knew and understood it so well that it brought a feeling of utter self-loathing and disgust upon him that made him want to point his wand at himself and yell 'stupefy'.

I blew it...I blew everything. She'd never take me back now...Not after all those horrible things I said to her. He recalled the many times he had sneered at Jaimee or mocked her publicly during those last couple of months of school.

It hurt Draco even more to realize that in all those encounters, not once had Harry ever fought him back nor had she said or done anything to retaliate against him. In fact, all she had done was look into his eyes as though seeing right through his mask of hostility and anger into the hidden child that was desperate underneath.

And she was right of course – she did see right through him.

He had done all of the things he had those past few months as a defensive lashing out against the pain of losing her. Coward that he was, he couldn't bear the pain of thinking about her so instead, he had done what Slytherins do best – he ran like hell.

I don't deserve her...I've done nothing but think of myself. Draco thought bitterly as he buried his face into his hands, closing his eyes in heavy-hearted exhaustion. In his mind, he recalled the harsh accusations he had hurled at her about her moral character and about how she had 'slept with all those other men' behind his back.

Draco shook his head fiercely, stifling the loud, angry curse that came out of his mouth but he forced himself to continue his thoughts – more than willing to try and punish himself with as many images of the things he had done to her as he could possibly remember.

His heart constricted painfully when he recalled the way he had treated her during the Quidditch match the day of the kidnapping and the way he had thrown the engagement ring he had given her that same night out the window. He remembered the loving way with which she had bent down and had hidden his face from all their other friends so that they wouldn't see him crying – something she knew would break him completely if he was publicly seen in such a state.

Only Harry truly loved and understood him enough to know all those things – that despite the fact that he had hurt her and continued to hurt her, she still found it in her heart to protect him against everyone else even when he fought so hard to push her away.

Draco finally allowed the corners of his eyes to sting in realization, his hands tightening slowly into fists as he called to mind the hurtful



words he had exchanged with her that day in the locker room when he had seen the check in her bag.

He hadn't given her a chance to explain herself – nor did he allow himself to listen to the truth behind her words. He had been so blinded by the jealousy and pain that Elisa had ignited in him that day that he failed to realize the fact that Harry would never have done anything like that in the first place. It just wasn't in her nature to be deceitful – it was probably more in his.

Perhaps what had hurt him the most – even above seeing Anton's pendant – was the train ticket she had kept for Romania.

Draco sank down in his seat again and turned to face the open window beside him, peering out towards the section of London where he knew Harry was waiting at that very moment. He recalled his grandfather's words once more, cringing when he finally realized their full meaning.

"You did those things for yourself! Not the family! You've been using that as an excuse, you pathetic child!"

He hadn't wanted Harry to leave because he couldn't bear the agony of being separated from her for two years – that was the real reason he hadn't wanted to wait for her and had tried to force her into their rushed marriage in the first place.

It hadn't been for his family. It had been for himself.

Harry had been the one person who had loved him even with all his horrible imperfections. She was the one person who had accepted every single one of his flaws and yet, the minute she asked him to return the favor, he had shoved her away like a used toy.

They were right. I am a selfish bastard. I am a goddamn child. I deserve nothing less than a woman like Elisa who is exactly as selfish as I am. Draco thought resentfully to himself, his eyes traveling from the window to the mirror in front of him. He glared at his reflection in disgust, shaking his head at the pitiful image he made.

Harry was the only reason his life suddenly began to make sense. Now that she was gone, he felt nothing less than the empty, insignificant scum he had made himself out to be.

I deserve this.

Draco tried to stop the tears of regret falling from his eyes as he stood up and hastily looked around for the suede jacket he had been wearing earlier that morning. He found it hanging off the nearby wall and walked over to it, reaching his hand into one of the pockets for a handkerchief.

Once he had pulled his hand back, one of his fingers snagged onto something and a small, rectangular slip of paper fell out of the jacket's pocket onto the room's carpeted floor. He sighed in slight irritation and bent down to pick it up, holding it up into the light radiating from the window.

As soon as he saw what it was, however, the handkerchief held in his hand fell limply back to the floor and a fresh round of anguished tears – half from sadness and half from choked-up laughter – began to flood his eyes.

He tried to keep his fingers from trembling as he stared at the small strip of pictures he and Harry had taken a couple of months back in Hogsmeade during their first date – all of which were emanating with the genuine happiness he vividly remembered feeling at that very moment.

His eyes traveled slowly from the picture of Harry sticking her tongue out and crossing her eyes to the picture of her tickling him mercilessly and watching with a mischievous grin as the Slytherin desperately tried to fend her off and control his laughter at the same time.

For a long time, his gaze lingered on the last photograph – that of her leaning against him while he bent down and nuzzled her neck, his arms wrapped snugly around her waist and being caressed by her gentle hands. Both their eyes were closed in the picture yet the love and contentment was evident on both their faces, even when at the time they hadn't even realized it yet.

Feeling a glimmer of his strength and hope returning, Draco slowly placed the picture into his tuxedo's jacket pocket and looked through the window once more – his jaw clenching firmly in growing determination.

No...I don't deserve this. He shook his head firmly and angrily wiped the tears that had managed to escape his eyes.

I won't lose her just because of a mistake. Draco stood up straighter, turning slowly to face the door in front of him which he knew would lead him right out to greet the massive crowd of Wizarding elite waiting to see his wedding.

For the first time in months, Draco felt a modicum of his Slytherin cunning and resourcefulness returning. He raised an eyebrow and smirked impishly as the doorway began to open again and Blaise peered back inside.

"Draco...?"

The Italian heir tried not to grin back knowingly when he saw the well-missed, familiar glint of mischief twinkling in Draco's silver eyes. His best friend's sneer spoke of a thirst for revenge that he knew all too well and seeing it caused Blaise to laugh in amusement.

"We're about to start. What are you planning to do...Almighty Prince of Slytherin...?"

Hearing the humor in the other man's voice, Draco gave him a knowing wink before chuckling and readjusting his tuxedo jacket in an exaggeratingly calm fashion.

"Watch and learn, peasant..."

Harry sighed in exhaustion as she heaved her trunks and luggage onto the push cart, turning around and smiling at Ron in gratitude as the redhead helped her load the rest of her stuff. Sirius grunted

behind them as he placed her largest trunk on the cart, wincing and stretching his arms out in pain after. Hermione, Regina and Keira rushed through the entrance of the train station after them, all three of which were looking around the area for Harry's platform.

"Harry! Which platform did you say you were supposed to be in again?" Hermione asked as she reached them, peering over at the train ticket the other girl held in her hand. Harry peered down at it as well, raising an eyebrow before replying.

"Platform six and three quarters..." She mused to herself in amazement before letting out a chuckle. Ron turned to look at her in question. "What? What's so funny?" He asked, the two of them falling behind as Hermione led the others to their designated platform.

Harry shook her head, still chuckling to herself. "Nothing, it's just...It's amusing how all the Wizarding trains are in between the muggle ones. It's interesting – I just thought that the Hogwarts Express was the only one hidden in here." She told him, causing Ron to roll his eyes at her.

"Of course they are, Harry. There are dozens of wizarding trains here. Which reminds me, why do you need a train to go to Romania? Can't Ashford just...I don't know... portkey you guys there or something?" He asked in mild curiosity but Harry shook her head at his question.

"The location we're going to is strictly inaccessible so no other form of transportation works to get there. We take a train from here, stop when we reach Romania and hike the rest of the way. It's a bit of a hassle really." She admitted, sighing again as they passed platform 9 and 10 – their old entryway towards the Hogwarts express.

Ron saw the look on her face and laughed, slinging an arm over her shoulder in comfort. "Cheer up, mate...Like you said, those two years will be over before you know it. We'll be waiting right here for you when you come back." He reassured her and Harry smiled, nodding in agreement.

"Yeah...You're right. It just feels like I'm going to miss a lot in both your lives. I mean...Hermione's getting married next month and you're getting married next year..." She gave him a sad smile and

shook her head. "I just wish I could be there to see it. I'm so sorry." She told him and hearing this, Ron felt sadness take its toll on him as well.

He forced himself to smile and squeeze her shoulders. "You'll watch it from a pensieve when you get back. No worries! Weddings tend to be boring most of the time anyway." He kidded, causing Harry to roll her eyes and laugh.

He would have said more but Hermione and Regina both stopped right in the middle of platform six and seven, turning back around and giving Harry a sad smile. "Well...I'm afraid we aren't allowed in beyond this point, Harry." Regina told him kindly, watching as Harry's eyes flickered in dismay.

"Wh—What? But parents are allowed on the platform of the Hogwarts Express right?! C—Can't you guys stay for a couple more minutes—" Harry was cut off by Hermione launching herself at her in a tight hug, the brunette's eyes filling with worry.

"Oh Harry...It's not like we don't want to. But this is a ministry-reserved train for Unspeakable recruits only. We'd get into big trouble if we tried to board the platform with you." She told her, sighing when she felt Harry wrap her arms tighter around her in a hug.

She pulled away and looked up into Hermione's warm eyes, watching as the brown orbs began to fill slowly with tears. "I—I'll...I'll really miss you guys." Harry admitted softly, her eyes traveling from Hermione to Ron's own sad smile.

Ron allowed a light laugh and finally stepped toward her, pulling the black-haired girl into a tight, brotherly embrace. "What the hell...Now that you're no longer a bloke, I suppose it's okay to hug you now." He teased lightly, causing Harry to laugh and punch him on the arm. "Good luck, Harry...It'll be lonely without you..." He added with a wistful smile that Harry easily returned.

As soon as Ron had pushed the cart containing her belongings toward her, Harry finally looked up at both Sirius and Regina – the

latter of which had Keira in her arms. Keira was sniffing to herself and looking up at Harry with wide, imploring eyes.

“Do you have to go, Harry...? I won’t have a playmate anymore when you’re gone...” She murmured softly, sniffing again and causing the former Gryffindor to laugh fondly at the five-year-old’s words. Regina smiled and set her daughter down so that Harry could crouch down and envelope her in a tight hug.

Sensing Keira’s sniffing against her shoulder, Harry pulled back and offered the child an encouraging smile. “Sure you will, Keira...You’ll be spending so much time playing with Isabella that you won’t even notice that I’m gone. Trust me...I’ll be back before you know it.” She assured her, causing Keira to scoff at her words.

“Yeah right—”

“I swear.” Harry interjected with a chuckle, squeezing the little girl again before she stood back up and ruffled Keira’s hair affectionately. “...And I promise that the moment I get back, I’m going to take you to one of those muggle amusement parks we talked about. How about that?” She laughed when Keira instantly looked up with a wide grin and nodded excitedly at her words.

“Okay! You’re not supposed to break promises!” She told the older girl proudly, to which not only Harry but Sirius and Regina also laughed in response. Harry nodded her agreement, leaning down one last time to give Keira a kiss on the forehead.

“I won’t, Keira.”

Once the little girl had settled down once again, Harry looked up and met Regina’s warm, friendly smile. The former debutante nodded to her in farewell, her features looking slightly uncertain as she spoke.

“Take care of yourself, Harry...We’ll be praying for your safe return.” She told her and instead of answering, Harry pulled her into a warm hug as well – using the same move to meet Sirius’ eyes above her shoulder and give her godfather a knowing wink.

"You and my dim-witted godfather had better be at least dating by the time I get back, Regina." Harry warned lightheartedly, causing Regina's cheeks to flush deep pink when she pulled back. Sirius growled and launched himself at his goddaughter, pulling her into a playful noogie.

"I hope that facility teaches you some tact, Miss Potter." He replied evenly, grinning and pulling his laughing goddaughter into a tight, warm hug. Harry hugged him back for a long time, oblivious to the sad lingering smile Ron and Hermione exchanged when they saw the tormented expression on her face.

Taking a deep breath, she tightened her arms around Sirius and shut her eyes to hide her tears. "I'll miss you, Paddy..." She said softly, biting her lip when Sirius sighed and rubbed her back in a gesture of silent comfort.

"I'll miss you too, Prongslet..." He pulled back and offered her a disarming smile, reaching up to push a stray lock of hair that had fallen into her eyes. "But like Ron said, I'll be right here when you get back. I promise...So you'd better kick a lot of arse over there otherwise, I won't be proud of you." He quipped, finally earning a weak laugh from the former Gryffindor.

She nodded and finally stepped away from him to grab her cart, looking up one last time to meet all their sad smiles. "Well...I guess...I'd better get going, then." She said uncertainly, her eyes flicking briefly from them to the platform behind her.

Glancing at her watch, Hermione nodded frantically and gestured for her to go inside. "You should, Harry! You still have to register with Ashford and load your stuff onto the train, you don't want to be late." She told her, reaching over one last time to give her best friend a tight hug.

Harry returned it briefly before pulling away and pulling her train ticket out of her pocket. "A—Alright...I—I'll see you guys then." She began uncertainly, biting her lip as they all raised their hands and began to wave at her as she began backing away.

“Take care of yourself, Harry!” Regina called out and Keira waved frantically beside her. Sirius, Ron and Hermione were barely waving but the looks in their eyes told Harry everything and she gave them one last smile – storing in her mind that very image of them in that one moment.

“Regina...Keira...Ron...Hermione...Sirius...” She nodded to each of them and stopped backing up, her back nearly touching the barrier between platform 6 and 7. When each of them smiled back at her and waved their final goodbyes, Harry finally managed a wink before she turned and took a step forward, disappearing right into the barrier entrance.

Ron and Hermione stared at the barrier in several moments of silence, blinking back the mistiness forming in their eyes. Beside them, Sirius grinned and bent down to scoop Keira into his arms before he stood back up and gave Regina a handsome, roguish grin.

“So...About what my insane goddaughter said back there...I really wouldn’t want to disappoint her or anything...You know. So I was wondering...” His voice trailed off uncertainly when he caught both Ron and Hermione rolling their eyes at his rather lame approach. Regina, however, laughed and looked up at him with sparkling blue eyes.

“Yes, Black? What is it you want...?”

Sirius grimaced once before shrugging and letting out a light self-mocking chuckle at the next words that came out of his mouth. “Regina...Would you like to have dinner with me sometime...? You know...As an actual date...?” He paused when Regina burst out into soft laughter but due to his growing nervousness, he forced himself to speak anyway.

“We can eat somewhere fancy and nice in London! Then perhaps go and see the opera afterwards.” Regina opened her mouth to answer him but Sirius ranted further, purposely ignoring Ron, Hermione and Keira’s sniggering behind him.



“O—or we could do the opera first then eat dinner. Or maybe we can go and have a picnic or something if that’s more preferable or maybe even—“

Regina held a hand up to interrupt him, her shoulders shaking with barely controlled laughter as she answered him in a loud, amused voice.

“I’d love to go out with you, Sirius.”

From the altar of the church, Draco kept a perfectly calm, unreadable expression on his face as he watched the bridal procession slowly making their way through the aisle in perfect synch. One after the other, each row of guests turned as the groomsmen and the bridesmaids all began to walk down the aisle in pairs, making their way slowly towards their places.

The music continued as Blaise and the blonde Beauxbatons debutante Elisa had chosen as her maid of honor – Draco hadn’t even bothered to remember her name – walked down the aisle towards him and stood with him by the altar.

Cherry-Lyn, dressed in an adorable gown of pink and white, followed after them and cheerfully began to sprinkle the aisle with beautiful rose petals, giggling between each step and causing most of the watching guests to turn and stare at the cute sight. The toddler giggled and waved when she saw Draco watching her and though she obviously had no idea what was going on, he smiled at her and waved back in mild amusement.

Amidst all this, Draco let his eyes wander briefly around the church. He smirked when he caught sight of Pansy Parkinson seated between her parents and sniffing loudly into a white handkerchief. Beside her sat most of the other Slytherins and Draco nodded to them in acknowledgement.

At the front of the church, Lorraine was watching the proceedings carefully and when he caught her eye, she gave him a sad, imploring

look and shook her head fiercely as though to warn him off. Anton was seated right beside her but the half-veela didn't look up and looked busy staring at something he was holding in his palm.

Disregarding the matter as unimportant, Draco saw the rest of his other cousins behind him. William and Reggie were both giving him encouraging smiles and trying to hide the disappointment in their eyes. Seated beside their husbands, Alex and Nadine were blatantly sneering at him in disbelief.

When he finally looked at his parents, Draco stiffened when he met Lucius' unwavering gaze. His father nodded briefly to him while his mother was wiping her tears onto a handkerchief, looking up and giving him a tearful smile. His grandfather looked up at him once, his eyes clearly speaking of the same words he had told Draco the night before while his grandmother was trying her best to smile at him with a hint of sadness in her eyes.

Forcing himself to look away from all this, Draco turned back to the church entrance just in time as Elisa finally walked onto the aisle – looking completely sophisticated and beautiful in her tailored, chiffon wedding gown. The crowd of guests gave their corresponding 'oohs' and 'awwws' at this as she began walking towards him with a beaming smile on her perfectly made-up face.

She looked exquisite – exactly like an heiress would look like with her hair styled up and her body adorned with the most expensive diamonds most of the other women around the room had ever seen. Her father, Jacob Cartwright, was beaming proudly as he walked her down the aisle towards Draco, never noticing the look of derision that was forming on Draco's face.

In blatant view of the watching crowd, the Malfoy heir sneered publicly at the approaching bride from where he stood at the aisle – causing several raised eyebrows and confusion among the watching guest and most importantly, the photographers and gossip reporters present.

Elisa tried to both ignore and distract the crowd from Draco's reaction by forcing a smile, making her way very gracefully towards him and

allowing her father to hand her over to him. Once she had slipped her gloved hand into his, Draco raised an eyebrow before he promptly let it drop gracelessly from his grip.

His supposed bride had to bite back the sharp gasp of angry shock that had almost escaped her lips when she heard some of the Malfoys – particularly Lorraine – and some of Draco's Slytherin friends trying to hold back their amused laughter at the humiliating sight.

Her cheeks flushed red, Elisa merely smiled at the guests again and finally turned to face the administering priest who had walked up in front of them and had given them a warm smile. He frowned slightly when he noticed that Draco was refusing to hold Elisa's offered hand but at Draco's calm smile and mocking nod, he continued anyway.

"Ladies and gentlemen... Honorary and esteemed members of Wizarding society...We are gathered here today to celebrate the momentous union of Wizard and Witch – Draco Lucius Malfoy and Elisa Annabelle Cartwright in Matrimony..." He began loudly, causing Draco's ears to cringe at the implication of his words.

He expressed his horror by faking a loud cough and purposely raising a hand to signal the minister to pause for a brief second as he turned and gestured to Blaise beside him for a glass of water. Blaise was trying hard not to laugh at the indignation and horror on Elisa's face as he nodded and fetched what he was told.

After a long swig, Draco finally looked back up at the shocked priest and nodded, giving him a quirky grin to continue. At this point, Elisa was almost as red as her lipstick in utter embarrassment and was struggling to hold herself together amidst the growing whispers and murmurs from the guests around the church.

"Marriage is not merely a relationship. It is a commitment and a sacrifice. A selfless joining of two individual beings into one—"

For the life of him, Draco didn't have the patience nor the stomach to listen to the rest of the ceremony. He blanked out the middle of it

completely, checking his watch every now and then to make sure he wasn't going over his set time limit.

About thirty full minutes of this had passed when he came to – only to find the priest addressing Elisa directly, ironically bringing everyone's eyes to Draco's smirking face once more. Elisa was holding her breath in fear before she answered, her eyes growing wide in anxiousness as Draco looked up at her and watched her with a mocking grin.

"Do you...Elisa...Take Draco to be your lawfully wedded husband?"

Draco's grin faded into another sneer of contempt, his eyes narrowing when Elisa looked up and gave him the same sugary sweet smile she had given him the first time he had met her.

"I do."

One of Draco's eyebrows rose up and he rewarded her with a charming smile that seemed to cause Elisa's shoulders to loosen slightly in relief.

"...And do you...Draco...Take Elisa to be your lawfully wedded wife?"

Looking back at Elisa's lovely, nervous features, Draco quirked the corners of his lips into another handsome smile. He took one of her gloved hands into his, squeezing her fingers and using his free hand to tilt her chin up to meet his face. Elisa's eyes gleamed in pleasure and she felt a rush of excitement as she waited for the blonde's next two words.

Unfortunately, Draco smiled and only said one.

"...Nope."

All at once, sharp gasps of shock, anger and mayhem seemed to break out all around them.

"WHAT?!"

Elisa's shrill, angry shriek pierced through everyone's shocked daze. She suddenly yanked herself from Draco and glared at him with maniacal, flashing eyes – her pale cheeks dark with utmost humiliation and her face twisted into an ugly snarl.

The Malfoy heir's smile never wavered from his face as around them, the entire church had broken out into loud, shocked whispers and murmuring – led mostly by the furious screaming and shouting that had erupted from Elisa's friends and family.

Unknown to Draco, both Lorraine and Genevieve's faces had also brightened with wide smiles while Narcissa was blinking in unexpected shock, staring speechlessly as Jacob Cartwright lunged at Lucius and yanked the Malfoy head up from his seat in outrage.

Blaise was smirking and was trying to hide his face from Elisa's furious maid of honor while the rest of the Slytherins, after recovering from their initial shock, were sniggering loudly to themselves as they watched Elisa explode in a mess of angry screaming and humiliated tears.

**"YOU BASTARD! YOU JERK! HOW DARE YOU?! I HAVE NEVER BEEN SO HUMILIATED IN MY LIFE! BASTARD! ARSEHOLE!"**

In the middle of trying to cover his ears from Elisa's shrill screaming and of trying to wrestle away from her violent hitting at his face repeatedly with her bridal bouquet, Draco looked up and saw the look in his grandfather's face.

The older Malfoy seemed to be watching Draco shield his face from Elisa's nails in amusement but Draco soon realized that the gleam in his eyes was not amusement but something else – pride. Once Blaise had managed to hold Elisa back from lunging at Draco and strangling his neck, he looked back up and smiled at his grandfather in humble gratitude, to which the older Malfoy nodded back in cold indifference.

Back up at the altar, the priest looked completely worn out and was already heading out of the chapel, shaking his head in disbelief and muttering to himself about 'kids wanting to get married too early and then backing off.' He was followed by more guests storming out of the

church in shock – most of them Ministry officials and the Heads of wizarding families who simply did not care to watch any more unnecessary drama if there was no longer a wedding.

Draco was just about to run back down the altar towards his family when Elisa broke free from Blaise's grasp and lunged at him again, clawing at him and yanking wildly at him with her nails.

"YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE, DRACO MALFOY! TAKE BACK WHAT YOU SAID! TAKE IT BACK!" She screamed at him again, a crazed look in her darkened eyes as she struggled with Draco's attempts to free himself from her grasp.

"Ugh! Cartwright, let me go! You're disgusting and pathetic!" He snapped as he tried to shove her away from him but she latched onto him like a leech, her nails clawing painfully at his arms.

"YOU'RE BOUND BY YOUR WORD, DRACO! YOU CAN'T BREAK THE CONTRACT WE MADE! IT'S LEGAL AND BINDING AND YOU KNOW IT! YOU'RE HONOR-BOUND TO MARRY ME!" She shrieked at him, laughing when Draco ceased his struggles and paled – his face turning back uncertainly to meet his father's sharp eyes from where he stood at the front of the church.

"My daughter is right, Lucius! By his very name alone, your son is honor-bound to keep his word to my daughter and marry her! You know that as well as I do."

These were the words Jacob Cartwright had been hissing to Lucius when the Malfoy head had looked up and met Draco's pleading, questioning gaze at him. After a long moment filled with an unspoken agreement between father and son, Lucius finally sighed and snatched the long contract Jacob had been repeatedly shoving into his face for the past fifteen minutes.

Then – to the entire Malfoy family's surprise, Draco's disbelieving laugh and Elisa's horrified gasp – Lucius Malfoy raised the contract right up into Jacob's face, pulled out his wand and ignited the offending piece of parchment in fierce, bright green flames.

Jacob's face botched purple as he reached out a hand to grasp it, only to yelp in pain and yank it back as he was burned by the fire. "Lucius! What is the meaning of this?! I thought a Malfoy is required to keep his word! You can't do this, you're a disgrace to your name!" He snapped angrily, watching as the contract disintegrated into ashes on the ground.

As soon as it did, Jacob growled and grabbed Lucius by the front of his robes. "Shall I destroy your family's esteemed reputation now?!" He yelled furiously, unaware that two hulking bodyguards had walked up behind him and were now glaring down at his form in threat.

Lucius gave the other man a single, contemptuous glare. "My son didn't break his word, Cartwright." He chuckled when he saw the look of utter confusion on both Jacob and Elisa's face.

"What the bloody hell—"

"I did." Lucius' face finally broke out into the famous, threatening Malfoy sneer before he raised an eyebrow and easily shoved Jacob away from him, causing the other man to stumble slightly against the two bodyguards waiting to take him away.

Just as the bodyguards grasped Jacob by his robes and forced him up onto his feet, Lucius spoke again and his words brought another wide smile to Draco's face.

"NO ONE tells a Malfoy what to do!"

The Head of the Malfoy family gave one final smirk before he snapped his fingers once, causing the bodyguards to begin dragging Jacob away, pulling the protesting man through the sea of leaving guests around the church towards the exit.

Despite all this, Elisa was still clutching tightly onto the jacket of Draco's tuxedo and was refusing to let him walk down the aisle – wrestling and struggling with him until he finally exploded.

"DAMN IT, CARTWRIGHT! GET THE BLOODY HELL OFF ME!"

Elisa shook her head angrily and raised a hand to slap him, her cheeks now smudged with the mascara that had run from the tears that had spilled down her eyes.

“NO! YOU ARE NOT LEAVING ME AT THE ALTAR, DRACO! I WON’T ALLOW IT! DON’T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT—”

“That’s it! I’ve had just about enough of this irritating, screaming bitch.” Lorraine growled angrily under her breath. She shot up from her seat, ignoring her cousins’ protests as she shoved past them until she got right to the altar behind Draco.

“—AND IF YOU EVEN THINK FOR A SINGLE MOMENT THAT I AM GOING TO JUST LET THIS GO, I’m GOING TO—”

Elisa never got to finish the last of her sentence. In the span of two seconds – Lorraine had morphed into hostile form, raised a single clawed hand and slammed it right across the other girl’s midsection. Elisa screeched loudly as she practically flew across the room and collided with a figure making his way out the exit – Philippe Winchester.

Philippe cursed as an unconscious Elisa smacked right into him from behind, causing them both to fall clumsily to the floor and in turn, cause several more exiting aristocrats around them to trip on their limbs and fall down on top of them.

The reporters and photographers absolutely went crazy after this, rushing excitedly onto the scene to take as many photographs as they could. Unfortunately, Philippe didn’t appreciate this and attempted to stand back up – his head colliding with one of the reporter’s cameras until he fell back down onto the ground with a loud yelp of pain.

Laughing harder than he remembered he ever did in his life, Draco looked up and met Lorraine’s laughing smile with an identical one of his own. He didn’t say anything and instead, nodded his gratitude at her – to which she grinned and winked back.

“Go get your real bride.”



Draco's smirk transformed into a genuine smile at her words. Checking his watch and noting in panic that he had only twenty five minutes left to get to the station, he had just started to run towards the crowded exit of the church when another voice called out again, stopping him in his tracks.

"DRACO!"

Draco turned around slowly from where he had stopped in the middle of the aisle and found himself staring at Anton's uncertain face. The male half-veela held up something in his hand – causing the rest of the watching Malfoys to blink up at it in curiosity.

Without saying anything else, Anton tossed it towards Draco, who caught it easily and raised it up into the light in confusion. Once he realized what it was, however, a small look of amazement and genuine gratitude reluctantly made its way onto his face.

Harry's engagement ring...I thought I lost it when I threw it out the window... Draco thought with a slow smile, looking back up and directing the grin towards his younger cousin to indicate his appreciation – along with the unspoken amity between the two of them.

Anton hesitated for a second before he shrugged and grinned back, failing to notice the looks of amazement they were receiving from the rest of their family. "I thought you might need it again." He quipped lightly, causing Draco to grin wider in agreement.

The two Malfoy sons stared at each other for a long time – a series of unspoken words being exchanged that did certainly did not go unnoticed by Lucius, Louis and Lawrence. Draco spoke up first, sighing and giving Anton a hesitant smile.

"Anton, I—I'm sorry for everything—"

To his surprise, Anton laughed and shook his head before pointing frantically at his own wristwatch. "Draco, you git! We'll exchange

bloody apologies later. Go!” He gestured hastily towards the church’s exit but Draco shook his head, his eyes twinkling mischievously.

“I need a short detour! Meet me at the manor!” He called out to the other blonde and Anton would have protested had Draco not followed it up with another frantic shout. “I’ll explain later! Just meet me there!” Anton didn’t ask any further questions and nodded in agreement, watching as Draco ran across the church’s aisle towards the entrance.

Blaise, Lorraine and the rest of the astonished, chuckling Malfoys watched as Draco morphed into animagus form and jumped right through the waiting crowd of reporters and excited gossip columnists blocking the church’s entrance before disappearing completely from their sight.

Once he had gone and the rest of the Malfoys were left to deal with the sudden raging crowd of photographers swarming around them, Lawrence turned and met his wife’s beautiful, knowing smile.

“Was this...your influence, Lawrence...?”

Lawrence chuckled at the teasing note of her voice and leaned down to place a reverent kiss on the back of her hand. “Every Malfoy deserves the best, my love...It’s exactly why I chased after you.” He responded easily, his words causing his wife to blush but otherwise roll her eyes.

“You haven’t changed at all, you arrogant prick.”

“Harry! Over here!”

Harry looked up at the familiar voice and immediately saw Byron and a small group of teenagers standing by a small waiting area near the back of a small, private train. The students gathered around him consisted more of guys than of girls – in fact, there were only two other girls besides her and one of which Harry didn’t even know if she was a girl in the first place.

Shaking her amusing thoughts away, she smiled back at the metamorphagus and joined him where he waited near a stand of wizarding tabloids and candy. He grinned when she reached him and offered a hand up in greeting, which Harry accepted easily.

“Where’s Ashford...? Was I the last one to arrive?” She asked curiously, turning around and inspecting the other waiting students behind them. Byron smirked and nodded, pointing briefly behind him to where Ashford was conversing loudly with a group of other Unspeakables.

The Head Unspeakable looked up when he saw her and nodded briefly in greeting before turning back to yell at a lower-ranking official taking down his orders. Around them, Harry watched the steam coming from the train and the numerous ministry officials entering and exiting the platform.

“Yes, you’re the last one and Ashford is standing right behind me over there. Why do you think I chose this place to stand?” Byron answered her smugly, causing her to roll her eyes and laugh at the mischievous smirk on his face.

There were about fifteen of them all in all – including Byron and herself. The other students were quietly talking amongst themselves and throwing glances every now and then at the train to check if it starting up. Harry noted idly that many of them were wearing exactly what she was – simple jeans and a shirt. Except for Byron, who wore expensive khakis and a classy white button-down shirt.

She smirked at him when she saw this and raised a single eyebrow. “Aren’t you a little overdressed? We start training the moment we get there and you’re wearing khakis?” She kidded, causing Byron to redden slightly at the implication of her words.

He coughed and pretended to turn around and pick up a gossip tabloid. “I don’t need an excuse to look good, Potter. I’m a Malfoy.” He responded evenly, earning another laugh as she set her cart aside and continued to look around the platform in interest.

Byron pointed briefly to a lone official standing near the entrance to the train. "You'd better register your entry by that official over there. I'll stand here and watch your things." He told her and she gave him a thankful smile.

"Thanks...I'll be right back." She nodded to him and walked to where he had pointed, falling just behind another student wearing a black, leather jacket and black, spiked up hair. After he had signed his name on the sheet the official was holding, he sensed her presence and turned around.

"Oh excuse me, I didn't see you there!" He apologized hastily, offering her a grin as he stepped aside and allowed her to walk up to the official in front of him. She waved his apology away and returned his smile, looking up to meet an astonishingly striking pair of hazel-tinted eyes.

"Don't worry about it...Er—" She started as she looked up after signing her name on the registry sheet, blushing slightly when she noticed that he was roguishly handsome and was now blatantly checking her out from head to toe.

The boy grinned and offered her his hand, shoving his other hand into his jacket pocket. "—Spencer Addison. I recently graduated from Durmstrang Academy. You are one...hot...woman by the way." He told her with an easy grin that made her laugh when she shook his hand.

"Jaimee Potter...Hogwarts Graduate. It's a pleasure." She told him and hearing her name, Spencer's eyes widened in amusement. "Whoa...So it was true. You're Harry Potter, aren't you? I mean, well, you used to be." He hastily corrected himself as they slowly walked back to the waiting area.

Harry chuckled and nodded, watching as Spencer's eyes did the familiar flick to the scar on his forehead. "I'm afraid so...Although I have to ask you...I have met a lot of magical combatants from Durmstrang Academy, I never seemed to have met—"

“I’m gay and I wouldn’t be caught dead challenging you to a magical combat to win your hand in marriage.” He supplied hastily, instantly causing Harry to blink at him in shock before she burst out into amused laughter at his blunt answer.

After recovering from her hilarity, she looked back up and answered him with a quirky grin. “I should have figured.” She kidded, earning herself a quizzical look from Spencer. She continued before he had a chance to ask her what she meant. “I mean... The leather jacket and the tight fitting pants should have given it away.” She teased, causing Spencer to grin and wink at her.

They had reached Byron at that point and the metamorphagus looked rather irritated to see Spencer arriving with Harry. He looked up from the tabloid he was reading and threw the other man a disgruntled sneer. “Did you have to bring him along, Harry...?” He complained loudly and Harry would have asked him what was wrong when Spencer answered her silent question for her.

“What’s wrong, Malfoy...? Can you not stand being inches away from my raw sex appeal?” He kidded flirtatiously, causing Byron’s left eye to twitch and Harry to muffle another round of laughter. Turning to her, Byron flicked his gaze pointedly at Spencer’s grinning, handsome face.

“He’s done nothing but hit on me for the past twenty minutes. Please make him go away.” He hissed out through gritted teeth in a whisper loud enough for Spencer to hear him. Harry opened her mouth to respond but Spencer beat her to it again and slung an arm around Byron’s shoulders.

“Aw, come on...You know you find me attractive. I find you attractive too. Why don’t we just stop pretending and shag already?” He grinned cheekily until Byron’s eye twitched again and he shrugged the other man’s arms off his shoulders, using a single hand to push him away.

“Don’t touch me...plebian.”

Harry was trying hard not to laugh at their amusing interaction and had stepped back to watch the scene in interest, wondering to herself how on earth she had managed to attach herself to two gay men at once.

First Ashford and now this...Merlin, what is this? Gay camp? She thought in mild humor, chuckling once again as she watched Byron fighting off more of Spencer's advances by making as many rude, dismissive comments as much as possible.

She couldn't prevent the next line that came out of her mouth.

"Judging from the fact that more than half of the potentials here right now are men, I'd say you guys are pretty happy aren't you?" She teased, instantly earning himself a warning glare from Byron and an easy grin and wink from Spencer.

Byron sighed and turned back to read the tabloid he was holding while Spencer glanced over his shoulder at the other students participating in the Unspeakable program. The two other women besides Harry sat beside each other near the end of the waiting bench – one of them with bushy eyebrows and a muscular frame while the other was brunette, modestly pretty and had her hair up in neat ponytail.

The rest of the other students were men and most of which Harry had never seen before. She moved her gaze back over to Ashford, watching as the handsome man nodded briefly to the other Ministry Heads in farewell before turning and heading into the private train.

Beside her, Byron was also watching this and was smirking to himself in thought. He leaned down to whisper something into her ear. "Ashford is damn hot, isn't he? I hope I get to see him shirtless throughout this program." He murmured, causing Harry to redden at his words.

"Ugh...Can you not?!" She complained out loud just as Spencer followed their gaze before grinning cheekily and gesturing towards the direction Ashford had disappeared off to. "You should tell him you're a metamorphagus. That's usually a turn-on for most people. It

helps if you can enlarge certain things..." He said out loud, causing Harry to nearly spit out the mouthful of water she had taken from her drink bottle.

Byron threw the other man a scandalized glare, forcing Spencer to smile back nervously until he eventually shrugged and walked away to talk to the others behind them. Once he had left, Byron turned to Harry and immediately noticed the other teenager glancing at her wristwatch with a tense expression on her face.

"Harry...?"

Startled, she looked up and met his knowing eyes, blushing when she realized he was giving her a sad smile. "I—I was just checking the time. I—It's exactly ten minutes before the train leaves and well...I'm just anxious—"

"It's exactly ten minutes before my idiot cousin gets married to that bitch for the rest of his life too." Byron cut her off and set down the gossip tabloid he had in his hand. Harry looked disheartened at his words, her eyes flicking over to the gigantic picture of both Draco and Elisa splashed right onto the front page of the newspaper Byron had set down.

She shook her head and gave him a helpless smile. "We made our decisions, Byron. I guess I'll have to live with it." She forced a smile onto her face and gestured towards Spencer with a teasing wink. "In any case, perhaps I'll just spend the next two years observing the courtship rituals of two gay men." She kidded, causing Byron to redden and give her an admonishing glare.

"Weren't you gay? How could you even have stomached being with men if you weren't?" He asked her with a pointed look but she grinned and shook her head. "Bisexual...Well, let me rephrase that. I was straight in practice but bisexual in theory. I've never actually dated a man before I became a woman." She told him with a laugh, causing the metamorphagus to smirk.

"Then allow me to teach you the oh-so-interesting ways in which men try to woo each other." He kidded but Harry failed to hear him as she

checked her watch again, wincing when he noticed her failed attempt at discretion.

“I’m sorry, what did you say...? I wasn’t listening.”

Byron sighed but before he answered, Ashford finally peeked out of the train and signaled for the participants to come inside. Grabbing his cart, he paused briefly to look at her and give her a meaningful smile.

“It doesn’t have to end like this, you know.”

Harry didn’t bother answering him as he walked past her and followed the other thirteen participants into the sleek, silver train waiting for them. Spencer immediately dashed right after him, leaving Harry lost in her own thoughts as she looked intently at her wristwatch.

Reaching her other hand into her jacket pocket, she pulled out the small strip of pictures she and Draco had taken several months ago in Hogsmeade, staring at it with a sad, fond smile. She didn’t really know how long she was standing there when she heard Ashford’s irritated voice shouting at her from inside the train.

“Potter! Get your arse into this train right now! We’re leaving in five minutes!”

She flushed in embarrassment and shoved the strip of pictures back into her jacket pocket. Muttering under her breath about impatient department heads, she grabbed her cart and was about to stroll off towards the train entrance when a loud, familiar voice stopped her dead in her tracks.

“HARRY!”

Draco didn’t know how long he had been running as he made his way through the crowded train station in London, pushing and shoving past the many muggles and wizards in his way. Most of them stared at him quizzically – no doubt due to the fact that he hadn’t bothered to



change out of his tux yet – but Draco never noticed them, his eyes darting frantically from platform to platform.

WHERE THE BLOODY HELL ARE PLATFORM 6 AND 7?! He thought impatiently as he clenched his jaw and ran hastily to a nearby muggle officer.

“Excuse me, sir! Could you tell me where platform 6 is?! It’s kind of an emergency!” He rushed out breathlessly, all but grabbing the elderly officer and shaking him furiously for him to answer as fast as he could.

The man gave him a suspicious look but obliged and pointed him towards the other side of the station. “It’s near the end of the station over on that side.” He said and Draco muttered an incomprehensible ‘thank you’ before rushing off again, ignoring the gasps of recognition he was receiving from the wizarding folk who recognized him as the Malfoy heir.

“Shouldn’t he be at his wedding?!”

“I heard he left that poor girl at the altar!”

Draco ignored them completely and forced his legs to run faster, knocking so many people in his path that some of the muggle officers started chasing after him and shouting angrily at him to stop.

Not now, damn it! Not now! He ducked as one of the officers tried to accost him before turning and swerving around an elderly muggle couple, muttering another apology as he continued. He looked up and finally caught sight of the big signs that read ‘Platform 6’ and ‘Platform 7’, laughing loudly in relief and exhilaration when he turned around noticed that he had lost the officers in the crowd.

“I made it! I’m here—FUCK!” The last part of his sentence came out as a curse as he felt a particularly painful blow to his jaw, causing him to nearly keel off balance. Clutching his bruised face, he looked up and saw Ron Weasley glaring hatefully at him with a hideous, angry snarl.

“What the bloody hell are you doing here, Malfoy?! You shouldn’t be here! Just STAY AWAY from Harry, you bloody bastard!” He raged, raising a fist to punch him again. Draco’s eyes widened and he backed a couple more steps.

“W—Weasley, calm down! I—I’m not here to hurt her—”

Again, he wasn’t given the chance to finish his sentence as he collided with someone behind him. Whirling around, he never even blinked before he felt another blow to his face against the other side of his jaw. This time, Draco did keel over to the ground, clutching his sore jaw in pain.

Looking up, he saw the absolute fury in Sirius Black’s eyes as he loomed over him, his face set into a murderous snarl. “What are you doing here?! Get the bloody hell out of here before I beat your precious face up!” He growled, raising his foot to stomp on the blonde.

“Sirius, STOP!”

Draco cringed and shut his eyes in anticipation but surprisingly enough, the pain never came. Blinking back up, he sighed in relief when he saw that Hermione and Regina had rushed into the scene, Hermione restraining her best friend and Regina restraining the marauder’s advances.

Sirius’ face was red with fury but he finally held himself back when Keira grabbed his hand, forcing him to stop and restrain himself. Ron was obviously trying to do the same thing, watching with a cold, indifferent glare as Draco shakily got back to his feet.

His jaw sore from both men’s punches, he turned an imploring look to Hermione’s tight-lipped expression and forced himself to speak in a soft, polite voice.

“May I please speak with Harry?”

“The hell you are—”

“Sirius! Let him speak!” Regina interrupted Sirius’ growling response, turning to give Draco a kind, knowing smile. “Why do you need to talk to her, Draco?” She asked gently, trying to coax a response from him but Draco stubbornly glared back.

“That’s none of your business—”

“You miserable little jerk!” Sirius blurted out again, ready to strangle him but Draco flinched when Hermione spoke up sharply, directing his face back to meet hers.

“Why are you here, Draco? What more do you need to tell her?” She asked carefully, looking up and inspecting the emotions in his eyes. Ron watched him carefully, his eyes narrowed in disbelief as Draco looked up at them and forced himself to answer their question.

“...That I love her.”

That seemed to be the exact answer Hermione was looking for. The former Head Girl smiled at him, much to Ron and Sirius’ scoffing expressions. Looking up and noting that Regina and Keira were both smiling as well, Hermione finally stepped aside and indicated to the barrier behind her.

“You have some serious groveling to do, Draco.” She told him, smirking in amusement when Draco’s face lit up in a similar smirk of agreement.

Ignoring Sirius and Ron’s angry protests behind him, he ducked their further attempts to grab his throat and stepped through the small barrier – his eyes immediately trying to refocus themselves as he was met with the sight of a sleek silver train and waiting area in front of him.

Once he confirmed that he was at the right station by catching sight of Byron just before the other Malfoy entered the train, Draco immediately made to run toward him – only to be stopped by two pairs of strong hands.

“Stop! What are you doing here?! No friends and family beyond this point!”

Gritting his teeth in irritation, Draco looked up and met the pointed glares of two Ministry officials guarding the entrance to the platform – both of which looked huge enough to manhandle him easily with just their fingers.

Unfortunately, that fact alone didn’t stop his famous Malfoy arrogance from seeping through.

“How dare you touch me?! Don’t you know who I am?! I am the heir to the Malfoy family! I can have you both fired—”

Draco stopped and let his voice trail off when he saw the lone figure standing just by the side of the train. Her back was turned but he recognized Jaimee instantly – a smile making its way onto his face as he allowed himself a couple of seconds to just stand back and admire the very sight of her.

Her hair was loose and was falling gracefully past her shoulders – several strands of which danced along with the blowing wind. She wore her favorite pale green jacket and her favorite pair of jeans – the same one she had been wearing during their Hogsmeade date.

She was staring at something in her hand before she turned around and finally allowed Draco a glimpse of her beautiful face, the sight of which brought such an overwhelming feeling of happiness rushing through him that he ended up grinning like an idiot.

Struggling wildly with the officials restraining him and completely deaf to their angry protests, Draco cupped both his hands over his mouth and yelled out her name as loud as he possibly could.

“HARRY!”

Draco...?!

Harry could barely contain her shock nor did she expect the leap her heart made to her throat as she looked up and stared into Draco's handsome, smiling face.

The former Slytherin looked completely exhausted – his shoulders rising in deep breaths for air and his cheeks flushed with exertion. Strangely enough, he still looked as gorgeous and as regal as ever in his wedding tux, even despite the fact that the tuxedo had been loosened and his inner shirt's collar had been opened carelessly to allow him to breathe.

Looking back up at his face, she saw the genuine warmth and happiness reflected in his silver eyes. He continued to struggle wildly with the ministry officials guarding the entrance to the platform – the sight of which would have been hilarious had Harry not felt a small surge of uncertainty and anger at his arrival.

“LET ME GO, DAMN YOU! GET YOUR HANDS OFF ME!” Draco continued to shout and curse angrily at his captors, his loud voice drawing the attention of many of the other potentials as they rushed back out of the train and watched the scene in keen interest.

“Whoa...Draco?!” Byron exclaimed laughingly as he ran back down and stood beside Harry, watching as his most sophisticated cousin was literally shoving and struggling wildly with the officials like a common brute.

Harry was the only one among them who wasn't showing any reaction on her face, watching Draco in blank shock just as Ashford ran back down from the train and turned to face her. “Potter, what the bloody hell is he doing?! We are already delayed, we have to leave now!” He snapped at her, finally causing her to blink and look at him in confusion.

“H—huh...?”

Ashford's eyes flashed and he grabbed her by the front of her robes in growing impatience. “I order you to get that stupid jerk OFF this platform right now! If not, then I'm just about ready to leave without you—”

“T—Two minutes...Ashford. Just give me two minutes to talk to him.” Harry finally cut him off, releasing her cart hesitantly and giving the Head Unspeakable an imploring gaze.

The Head Unspeakable looked as though he was going to refuse for a minute but after seeing the desperate pleading in her eyes, he couldn't help but roll his eyes and scoff, gesturing back irritably to the watching participants in anger.

“Fine. Two minutes, Potter. The rest of you, **BACK ON THE TRAIN!**” He growled, causing the other participants to flinch and immediately rush back aboard the sleek private train.

Sighing heavily and setting her cart aside, Harry finally walked back to where Draco was still struggling with the officials and politely asked the two exasperated men to let her pass through.

“B—but, Miss Potter! We're under strict orders not to let anyone else onto this platform unless he or she has a ticket—”

“I know that...Which is why I'm going to talk to my persistent friend here back in the train station. I'll just be two minutes.” She told them quietly, ignoring the intense look Draco was giving her as the two men finally nodded and moved aside for them both.

Once they had both arrived back in the train station just between Platform 6 and 7, Harry finally turned around and met Draco's softly smiling face with a cold, blank stare.

“So...” She raised an eyebrow and gestured mockingly to his wedding tux. “Where's your bride, Malfoy? You could have caused more damage by bringing her here and parading her in front of me.” She muttered angrily, her eyes narrowing when all Draco did was stare back at her.

“I'm looking at her...”

Harry felt her cheeks flush instantly at his words. Panicking and desperate to make sure he didn't realize his words affected her, she took a step away from him and gave him a hateful sneer.

"Just what are you trying to pull here again, Malfoy?! I'm sorry but to be honest, once on that insane, bloody rollercoaster ride of being with you was enough! I'm not falling for it again!" She snapped at him, ignoring his wounded look as she shoved past him and made to walk back to the barrier.

She stopped, however, when he placed a hand on her arm and forced her back around to face him. "Harry, please! Just hear me out for a minute here, okay? I'm not here to fight you—"

Harry scoffed loudly, laughing harshly and giving him another disbelieving sneer. "I should hope not! So who do you think I'm sleeping with now, Draco? Huh?! Ron?! Anton?! Ashford?! Byron?! Are you going to go off again on your delusion bouts of jealous paranoia?!" She mocked loudly, causing the Malfoy heir to flinch in self-disgust at her words.

"N—no, I'm not! Harry—"

"Are you here to offer me more money to make me stay?! I'm sorry, Draco but I think I'll be needing a bit more than 500,000 galleons in order to stay with such a bastard like you!" She ranted sarcastically, causing him to flinch again and practically choke in his own shame.

"H—Harry, Grandfather told me the truth...I know you never took the money and I—"

"Oh really?!" Harry laughed and shoved him away from her, her eyes flashing dangerously with the anger for him she had been keeping inside for so long. "So you finally realized that the world doesn't revolve around your big, thick head have you? You're nothing but a pathetic, selfish child, Draco. You don't care about anyone but yourself!" She shook her head and would have turned around again had Draco latched onto her hand.

"That's not true, Harry! Just listen to me, damn it! I care about you—"

“Spare me the tantrum, Malfoy. I’m leaving.” She interrupted coldly, shaking her head at him in disgust. When he wouldn’t let her shrug off his hand, she finally snapped and raised her fist, slamming it right into his left eye.

Draco released her and nearly fell backwards in pain from the harsh impact. Blinking several times to refocus his aching eye, he steadied himself back on his feet and watched in dismay as Harry began walking away from him back towards the barrier.

His heart pounded painfully in his chest as he watched her walk further and further away from him, his mind just about screaming at him to do something lest she disappeared from his life forever. In his panic, Draco did the only thing left he could think of.

Checking quickly to make sure that none of the passing muggles were looking at him, he yanked his wand out of his pocket and flicked it ever so discreetly, silently initiating a spell he had only recently learned just several months back.

Once he felt the spell’s full effects on him, he finally turned back to Harry’s retreating form, shoved a thick pair of glasses onto his face and spoke out in a loud and clear voice.

“I love you...”

And just like that, Harry foot froze in half-step.

Slowly, she set it back down and stood with her back to him in long, agonizing silence. Draco watched her carefully, ignoring the weird stares and laughs he knew he was already receiving from the people passing him.

After what seemed like an eternity, she finally turned around and forced herself to look at him, her beautiful green eyes slowly widening in shock when they came to rest upon his face.

He was wearing a pair of thick, horn-framed square glasses but that wasn’t what had caused her to react that way. His sleek blonde hair



had been charmed into bright neon orange curls and numerous freckles had been plastered onto his pale cheeks. He offered her a hesitant smile, showing her his two, huge front teeth.

“Please forgive me, Harry.”

She stared at him with a blank, unblinking expression on her face, one of her eyebrows raised up higher than the other in stunned confusion. For a minute, she glared at him as though he was crazy and Draco had almost thought his last ploy failed when she shook her head and buried her face into her hands.

As though snapping out of a trance-like state, he watched as she looked back up at him – the corners of her lips finally twitching upwards with a hint of helpless, yielding mirth. Draco bit his lip uncertainly as he walked toward her, unsure of how to read her response.

“Malfoy...You stupid...silly...git...”

To his utter surprise and relief, Harry finally gave in and buried her face into her hands to muffle the sound of unmistakable laughter that escaped her lips. Watching as her shoulders shook with hilarity, Draco smiled widely and walked right up to her, reaching out and tilting her chin so that she was looking not at his face but into his eyes.

Harry’s eyes were slightly misty from a mixture of both laughter and raw emotion but she smiled weakly at him, waiting patiently as Draco began to speak.

“I know I hurt you, Harry. I know I’m a selfish, conceited bastard and I know that up till this point in my life, I never really understood what it truly meant to love a person for all that he or she was.” He began softly, waiting until she nodded in understanding before he continued.

“Most of all, I know that I could never...ever...deserve such a wonderful, beautiful, kind-hearted person like you.” He reached his free hand down to claim hers and closed his hand tightly around her shaking fingers.

“Not only have you made me grow and learn so much in the times I’ve spent with you but you’ve made me realize just how much it means to truly commit yourself to someone completely and unconditionally.” He paused and pulled her closer against him, wiping away the stray tear that had fallen down her cheek.

Seeing the turmoil on her face, he offered her a weak, teasing grin. “You’ve done things I never thought were possible. You made me laugh...You made me grow up...You made my entire family human and into a scandalously insane group that actually cares about one another...” He paused briefly when a tearful laugh escaped her lips.

“Most of all, you made me realize exactly how much I am not only deeply, madly, crazy in love with you...But also that I love you with everything I can be and everything I am.” He brushed a stray lock of hair that had fallen into her eyes, leaning down and pressing his forehead against hers.

“I love you, Harry...or Jaimee...Whoever you are and whoever you’ll be, I always will.” He paused and finally reached into his pocket, pulling out the familiar beautiful ring that had once rested comfortably on her finger.

Harry’s eyes widened in confusion. “Wh—where did you—”

Draco finally knelt down right in front of her and raised the ring up to her in humble offering, bowing his head down and keeping his eyes trained on her feet.

“I’m offering myself up to you completely. Body, mind and soul. You know everything about me – my faults, my fears, my goddamn weaknesses. I’m not perfect. I know now that I will never be. But with all my flaws, I offer myself to you exactly as I am. Who I am.”

He looked up at her and allowed her to see the terrified, timid look in his normally arrogant gray eyes. “I am so sorry...Please forgive me.” He swallowed the lump in his throat and forced himself to speak in a softer whisper.

“Please be my wife.”

Throughout everything he said, Harry had remained completely silent – watching him and listening to every word that came out of his mouth. It was only now that she moved again, however, and to his disbelief – instead of answering him right away, she knelt down in front of him, took the ring from his hand and gently removed the thick glasses from his face.

Guiding the both of them back up onto their feet, she raised an eyebrow at him and pulled out her wand from her pocket.

“How can I take you seriously when you look like that...?”

Choking back a startled, affectionate laugh, Draco waited as Harry checked around discreetly before she flicked her wand over him and removed the charms right off, smiling when she was once again staring at Draco’s agonizingly handsome features. Standing directly in front of him, she finally reached both hands and cradled his cheeks, staring intently into his face.

“Draco...I love you. And I’d be lying if I didn’t say that I’ve already forgiven you for everything that’s happened. There is nothing more I’d want than to marry you and to be your wife—”

Draco pulled her against him, wrapping his arms tightly around her waist.

“Then why don’t you—”

She sighed and shook her head, pulling away and giving him a sad smile. “I can’t be your wife, Draco...I’m not ready to marry you just yet. I still have to get used to being a woman...And I’m still going to Romania...I can’t give that one remaining part of my old self up for you.” She told him gently.

Draco nodded patiently and waited for her to continue. “I know your family needs you to marry and have children as soon as possible...And I can’t give you that right now, Draco. I want to go after my dream first...Do you understand?” She asked him softly and Draco nodded once more.

"I love you and I wish I didn't have to be separated from you just to do this but I'm sorry, Draco...I have to get on that train." She finished with a sigh, sadly placing the engagement ring back in his hand and looking back up in anticipation of the fight that was sure to follow.

To her surprise, Draco merely stared back at her for a moment before his lips slowly curled upwards into a handsome, mischievous grin.

He ignored her confused expression and reached into his pocket, pulling out a small, rectangular card that seemed awfully familiar to Harry. Blinking at it for several seconds, she failed to see the smirk forming on Draco's face as she realized what it was.

"T—ticket—"

"I know all that, Harry..." He held the train ticket up to her face, grinning wider when he saw her bright green eyes flooding with tears of utter happiness and laughter. "Which is why I'm going with you." He cocked an eyebrow and winked at the gaping, speechless expression on her face.

"Wh—What—"

Draco smirked at her stuttering, taking her hand in his and slipping the engagement ring back onto her finger as he answered. "You see, Harry...A very wise man told me that a Malfoy deserves the best. The rarest and most unique gem he could ever hope to find." Once the ring was back on her finger, he smiled and looked up, guiding her hand to his lips and giving it a kiss.

Harry gaped stupidly at him, her face still frozen in shock. "When I decided this season that I would settle for nothing less than the best girl out there for me, I meant it. Not only me, but my family deserves the best too...Don't you agree?" He asked her nonchalantly but all she could do was stutter out another incoherent response.

"B—but...Y—your family! T—tradition! Wh—what about your company?! Your job?! You're the CEO a—and—"

Draco laughed and raised a finger up to her lips, silencing her protests easily. "Like I said, Harry...My family wants the best...So they're going to have to wait." He continued before she spoke again, gesturing to the ticket he held in his hand.

"Anton will be handling my CEO position in MMC while I'm in Romania...In the meantime..." He took her hand in his and intertwined their fingers together, looking up and meeting her beautiful eyes.

"I'm going after my dream too."

Harry would have wanted to answer him but the soreness in her throat made it too hard to breathe or talk so she settled for staring right back at him, blinking back the aching tears that were once again threatening to escape her eyes.

Forcing a laugh, she feigned a grimace and tried to push him away gently in embarrassment. "D—damn these female hormones...I d—don't like being made to cry so much like an emotional twit—"

Draco rolled his eyes and sneered at her, shaking his head at her feeble attempts to hide her tears. "Oh for Merlin's sake, Potter, will you just shut up and be a bloody woman for once in your life?"

He never got a proper answer as Harry finally let out a tearful grin and jumped into his arms, laughing when Draco caught her easily and lifted her off the floor, smashing their lips together in a fierce, hungry kiss.

"Draco! I knew you couldn't stay away! You care about me too much! I knew you wanted to be an Unspeakable too!" Byron exclaimed jokingly as he watched Draco and Jaimee boarding the private train together hand in hand, both of their faces flushed in breathless exhilaration.

"WE ARE TWENTY BLOODY MINUTES OFF SCHEDULE! TAKE OFF NOW!" Ashford barked angrily at the train driver up front,

causing nearly everyone to jolt backwards as the train shot off at tremendous speed at his words.

Pointedly ignoring Byron's teasing grin, Draco helped Jaimee load her bags and trunk into one of the train's luggage compartments before finally turning to give Byron a smirk. "Spare me the theatrics, Byron. The minute this program is over, I'm going back to work as the CEO of MMC whether I'm selected from the program or not – which I know I will be." He told him arrogantly, causing Byron to roll his eyes but otherwise give him a knowing smile.

As the rest of the participants seated themselves along the train seats around them and Ashford walked on to the front to talk to the driver, Jaimee shot Draco a questioning look. "But you can't do that, Draco. If you refuse to be an Unspeakable when you get selected, they'll wipe your memory clean of all the skills you'd have learned too." She told him but Draco merely smirked wider and gave her a reassuring kiss on her hand.

"Not when you have the proper, higher-up contacts in the Ministry of Magic." He answered in a whisper loud enough for only Byron to hear, causing both Malfoys to share a meaningful wink. Jaimee's jaw dropped but before she could manage a retort, Byron spoke up to Draco again – gesturing to his lack of luggage whatsoever.

"By the way, Draco...Where are all your stuff? Did you really intend to go two years in a wedding tuxedo?" He asked with a laugh but Draco shook his head and leaned back comfortably against his seat. "Father will have the ministry send it off tomorrow. In the meantime, I'll just have to borrow from you, won't I?" He smirked when he saw the irritated expression on his cousin's face.

Before Byron could answer him properly, Spencer suddenly got up and plopped himself down onto the seat opposite Draco just behind Byron, leaning over and offering the Malfoy heir a wide, flirtatious grin.

"Excuse me, I don't believe we've met. I'm Spencer Addison; I graduated from Durmstrang Academy. I think you're bloody gorgeous—"

Harry growled and had her wand pointed at his throat in a heartbeat, causing Draco and Byron to chuckle as they watched Spencer's eyes widen and blink up nervously at the girl's furious face. Gulping, he offered her a sheepish smile and raised his hands up in a gesture of surrender.

"This Malfoy is mine, Addison."

A/N: It's over! It's finished! It's done! I can't believe this story is finally finished! I'm so happy, ecstatic and sad all at the same time! :sobs dramatically:

Well, everyone? Was that the ending you all wanted to happen? Heehee! I told you everything would work out in the end! I am just an absolute sucker for happy endings!

Don't worry, it isn't completely over yet! THERE'S ONE MORE CHAPTER LEFT! The final chapter will contain the epilogue to this story and a few more announcements about the upcoming sequel. Again, if you're interested, the summary of the sequel is posted on my profile page so please check it out and tell me your thoughts!

So again, I've worked so hard to write this chapter for you guys so PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE REVIEW! It would mean so much to me, I want to hear all your thoughts and opinions, mmkay? CHEERS!

Final Chapter: (Two Years After) Draco gives Harry a surprise, Final love scene

## Chapter 35 –Almost Perfect (Epilogue)

Two of the most wonderful years of his life had passed by in a blur.

Draco Malfoy, newly succeeded Head of the Illustrious Malfoy family, smiled as he watched his fiancée sigh softly to herself from where she stood by one of the balconies of the luxurious Malfoy estate in England. She stood in the exact same balcony Draco had been standing on the night before they left for Romania.

The scene she made looked so surreal that it made his breath hitch in his throat.

Her back was turned to him and she was staring down at the picturesque gardens below, the cool night breeze blowing through her long dark hair and making the black tresses flow gracefully behind her. The simple black dress she wore showed off enough of her back that Draco was itching to run his fingers down the pale, creamy skin and kiss her nape.

Instead, he settled for the equally satisfying treat of watching her, his eyes softening as she smiled to herself in thought before taking a deep breath of the night air. Her bright green eyes were staring so far ahead that Draco finally spoke up from behind her, reaching out to wrap his arms around her waist from behind and pull her against his chest.

“You’ve been standing there the whole time, Malfoy.” Jaimee accused lightly, turning around and pretending to raise an eyebrow in suspicion as Draco grinned and gave her a pointed look.

“After being tortured by Ashford’s bloody program for two years, I should hope you knew I was.” He quipped with a laugh, watching as Jaimee smiled back at the memory.

“I still can’t believe you refused the position and still got to keep every skill you learned in that entire program.” She thought out loud with a small scowl.



She, Draco and Byron had initially been the three selected participants who had qualified to join the Unspeakables Department in the Ministry after the program but since Draco had forfeited his position, Spencer Addison had been chosen instead. The Durmstrang graduate had been the fourth ranking participant after Byron.

Catching the slight irritation in her voice, Draco sniggered and planted a lingering kiss on her cheek. "It's called familial connections, Potter. Besides, the entire program wasn't a waste on my part. I couldn't very well have my wife be a bloody hell of a fighter and not learn to be one myself. It's insulting and degrading to my masculinity." He mock complained and he would have earned an earful from Harry had he not continued to speak.

"Besides, it was fun sneaking in as much sex as possible under Ashford's watchful eye. I never knew there were so many little nooks and corners around Romania to shag in." He wondered out loud, smirking when his fiancée's face burned a bright red and she punched him hard on the arm.

Forcing herself to laugh to hide her embarrassment, she shrugged and gave him a pointed smirk of her own. "It doesn't matter what you say, Draco. What matters is that I placed first and you placed second. I ranked higher than you! Ha!" She stuck her tongue out childishly at him and immediately squealed in laughter when he growled and grabbed her by her waist, hoisting her up from the floor and sitting her onto the balcony railing.

Feigning a look of anger, he positioned himself between her long legs and pressed their foreheads together. "Well...If I hadn't backed out, Addison wouldn't have gotten in would he? Though I think Byron kind of hated me for that...Now he'll have to stomach his constant groping every day at work." He smirked when Harry gave him a glare.

"Spencer isn't that bad—"

"He tried to grope my arse, Harry. Among other things..." Draco looked slightly disturbed and shook his head to clear the memory away. Laughing, she slid her arms around his neck and pulled herself closer against him – wrapping her legs seductively around his waist.

“You mean...like this...?” She teased coyly as she snaked her hands down and daringly grabbed at his arse, causing Draco’s eyes to snap open in shock. He pretended to give her a scandalous glare and fought to keep himself from laughing.

“Why, Mistress Malfoy! I am appalled that you would resort to such unladylike advances! I’ll have you know – this is not the way I want my future wife to act!” He scolded her teasingly, smirking wider when she unwrapped one of her legs around his waist and very suggestively trailed it up along his inner thigh.

“Oh really...? Tell me, Draco...How do you want your future wife to act like...?”

Her voice dropped to a sultry drawl and her lips quirked into a seductive smile. She looked up at him through long, teasingly lowered eyelashes, smirking when she saw the all-too-familiar lust burning in his gray eyes. The orbs darkened into a near-black shade when she finally kicked off both her shoes and slid her feet right up between his legs, inciting his immediate arousal.

Draco’s breath came in ragged gasps as his hands traveled down and slipped under the hem of her dress, squeezing her arse tightly and lifting her from the balcony railing. Jaimee chuckled at his reaction and leaned down to meet his lips, moaning softly when his tongue slipped into her mouth.

She kissed him back for several minutes, wrapping her arms around his neck and pulling their faces closer together. Once Draco had pulled back and fought to regain his composure with deep, breathless pants, Harry smirked at him and shook her head in amusement.

“That whole ‘female seduction’ workshop I learned in Romania really works.” She mused out loud, earning herself a snarl from her still very much aroused fiancé. “Damn you, Potter! You know my grandfather’s rules about shagging the night before the wedding! You did that on purpose!” He snapped irritably but Jaimee laughed again as he set her back down on her feet.

“It’s not my fault! How was I supposed to know I had to learn ‘seduction’ to become an undercover Auror?” Smiling innocently, she wrapped her arms around his neck again and looked up into his narrowed eyes.

He scoffed at her words and raised a single eyebrow. “Strange enough as it was, that program actually taught you how to be a woman.” He agreed, causing both of them to chuckle when they recalled the many failures and theatrics Harry had undergone in those two years.

Evidently – as Ashford had explained to them – one needed more than plain fighting skills to become an Unspeakable. The difference between an Auror and an Unspeakable was that the latter had to be undercover. This meant learning a whole lot more social maneuvers and skills to support your disguise. In Jaimee’s case, it meant being able to utilize her newly acquired female charms and appearance as efficiently as her fighting skills.

In truth, unspeakable Camp had turned out nothing like both of them had ever expected.

Harry had expected purely fighting, training and physical activity but apparently, these were only half the skills needed for her to become an Unspeakable.

I feel like a bloody con artist. I can practically pretend to be anyone now. Harry thought to herself in mild amusement but despite the exciting, hectic life they had both led those past two years, she knew that it wouldn’t nearly had been as fun had she not been with Draco.

The last two years they had spent in Romania together had been incredible.

Given that no one in Romania practically knew who they were; Harry had felt more liberated and more carefree than she ever felt in her life. She and Draco had done nothing else but bask in the other’s company, growing closer in those two years than they ever thought was possible.

Draco had grown to be so much more than her fiancé now. He had also become her closest best friend and she knew that the amount of time they had both decided to postpone their wedding for had been completely worth it – it had brought their relationship to a new level of trust and intimacy.

She had also gotten closer to Byron more than she had initially expected and the two of them had quickly become very good friends. The metamorphagus had spent most of the two years in Romania trying to get as close to Vincent Ashford as much as possible. Unfortunately, Ashford was either clueless or simply not that interested and had ignored all of Byron's advances – much to the Malfoy's irritation.

Spencer Addison, on the other hand, had been quite an amusing personality to be around. Not only had the Durmstrang graduate spent the entire two years constantly flirting with nearly all the male Unspeakable participants – most especially the two Malfoys – he had also managed to irritate Ashford enough with his advances that the Head Unspeakable had knocked him unconscious with a powerful spell for nearly five days.

Needless to say, Addison certainly learned to stay away from Ashford after that experience.

Harry was startled out of her thoughts when Draco pulled her to him again, turning her around so that her back rested comfortably against his chest and his arms were wrapped securely around her waist. He rested his chin on her shoulder and took in a deep breath of air, his eyes staring up at the clear night sky above them.

"What were you thinking about just now...?" He asked her curiously, nuzzling her neck and inhaling a whiff of her sweet, familiar scent. She smiled and leaned back comfortably against him, caressing the strong hands he had around her waist with her own.

"Nothing, I was just... I was just thinking about how everything happened exactly the way it's supposed to." She paused and tilted her head slightly to look up at him, blushing when she was met with his intense, piercing gaze.

"I'm just really...happy. And..." She paused again and bit her lip, her cheeks reddening even more as she carefully chose the next words to say. Draco took her silence as something negative and frowned slightly, turning her around in his arms and tilting her chin up to meet his face.

He gave her a weak, teasing smirk and raised a questioning eyebrow. "You're not getting second thoughts now are you...? Because I have to be honest...After two years of putting up with your PMS fits and all those 'womanly' skills you learned, I'm not buying the whole 'I need to learn more about being a woman' excuse anymore." He kidded, eliciting an easy laugh from Harry.

She shook her head and gave him a weak scowl before answering. "I did not have PMS fits, Malfoy! There were simply times that I was cranky—"

"You screamed at me for being 'insensitive' when all I did was ask you what time it was! You kicked me out of the bed when I fell asleep after we did it FIVE TIMES STRAIGHT and you wanted more! You nearly tore my head off when I woke you up—"

"Alright, alright! You made your point!" Harry interrupted irritably, glaring at him as he sniggered and gave her an amused smirk.

"So maybe I still have to get used to all that estrogen circulating inside me every month. Give me a break, you try swallowing a bucketful of emotions every day. Women are so bloody complicated." She complained, earning a laugh from Draco as he bent down and gave her a sweet kiss.

When he pulled back, his eyes were twinkling with mirth and he pulled her closer, one of his hands moving up to cradle her soft cheek. "So you're not planning on dumping me at the altar tomorrow...?" He asked softly, smiling roguishly and giving her a clear view of his left dimple.

She grinned back mischievously and leaned up to drop a kiss on his dimple before answering.

“Well...There may be certain things I need you to promise me before we get married. Think of it as a pre-nuptial agreement of some sort...” She began with a thoughtful expression her face, failing to see Draco’s jaw clench slightly in anxiousness.

“What kind of agreement?” He asked tersely, trying to keep the biting anger from his voice as he looked down and watched a playful smile light up her face.

She grinned at him again and cocked an eyebrow, pretending to mull her thoughts over. “Well...I need you to promise me that you won’t try to control me or try to keep me on a leash like you did before...” She began and Draco tensed up even more, his eyes hardening in anticipation.

“Go on.”

“Hmm...And...I need you to promise me that you won’t get mad whenever I have to work late certain nights. Or when I hang out with my other guy friends...” She continued, her eyes looking up at the sky and purposely ignoring the fact that Draco was now gritting his teeth.

“...What else?”

“Well there are the three most important things, of course.”

Sensing that the arms he had wrapped around her waist had grown noticeably tense, Harry finally turned back and met his angry glare with a light, playful wink, finally allowing him to realize that she had merely been teasing him.

“...I want – no – demand sex every night at least thrice. No exceptions to that rule, no matter how tired you are.” She quipped sternly with a suggestive grin, instantly causing the anger to extinguish from Draco’s eyes until it was replaced by a shocked, speechless hilarity.

He raised an incredulous eyebrow and held back a round of affectionate laughter as she continued to speak. “Also...I demand you

be at least civil to my friends. You don't have to like them but I want you to respect them. Especially since Ron is your cousin's husband and Hermione is your best friend's wife—" She pointed out and at this, Draco feigned an irritated sigh.

"If I must, Potter."

"—LASTLY..." She continued, interrupting his comment and causing the smirking blonde to give her an expectant look. Her cheeks tinted lightly with a rosy shade of pink and her eyes dropped down to the floor as she mumbled out her last request. Draco had to lean closer to hear her.

"...I want to have two of your wonderful children...soon..." She mumbled shyly, earning herself a loving smile from her fiancé as he reached out and tilted her chin up to meet his face.

"Just two?"

The smile on his face turned into such a perverted smirk that Harry let out a growl and raised a hand to punch him again.

"Malfoy, you are such a sex-starved pervert! I ought to—HEY!" She screamed with laughter as Draco dodged her punch easily, hoisted her up into his arms and slung her over his shoulder like a weightless sack of feathers.

"Let's go fulfill the last part of that pre-nuptial agreement right now, shall we?" Draco smirked impishly to himself as he began carrying her back inside the manor to his bedroom, ignoring her loud, laughing protests and wild struggling.

"DRACO, PUT ME DOWN! I SAID SOON! NOT NOW! LAWRENCE WILL KILL US BOTH IF WE DO THIS TONIGHT! DRACO!"

The blonde ignored her and walked calmly through the long, elegant corridors of the manor – whistling and ignoring the confused, scandalized stares they were receiving from some of the house-elves when they saw Harry struggling wildly against him.

His perpetual handsome smirk still in place, he answered her yelping laughter with a single, arrogant phrase he had only started to use since they had gotten back from Romania.

“I’m the Head of the Malfoy family, Potter. I can do what I want.”

“I now pronounce you man and wife...”

Hundreds of their friends and relatives had gathered in the London church that day and smiled as a strikingly handsome Draco, dressed in his newly tailored wedding tux, turned to smile at his beautiful bride. The former Gryffindor had decided to choose her own wedding dress instead of the extravagant gown Narcissa had picked for her and Draco was glad she did for he hadn’t been able to stop smiling like an idiot and take his eyes off her the minute she had entered that church on Sirius’ arm during the wedding march.

Only Jaimee could manage to look so astonishingly stunning and exquisite yet so self-effacing and modest at the same time. She wore a simple yet elegant strapless wedding dress that ended in a flowing white skirt above her ankles, her hair loose and flowing down her back in seductive waves and curls – exactly the way Draco liked it.

She wore only three pieces of jewelry that day– only the silver diamond pendant Draco had given her, a pair of beautiful matching earrings and the engagement ring she hadn’t take off for two years. Her wedding veil ended several inches above her waist and complimented her dress perfectly, making her look like an image that had stepped directly out of his dream.

“You may kiss the bride...”

Harry cringed at the word ‘bride’ and stuck her tongue out playfully at Draco as he turned to face her, laughing when Draco returned the favor and poked her playfully on her scar.

“You are such a girl, Potter.”

The minister in front of them smiled at the scene as Draco’s smirk transformed into a handsome smile and he wrapped his arms around



his new wife's slim waist, leaning down and capturing those teasingly smiling lips into a deep, passionate kiss.

Jaimee didn't hear the crowd of watching guests behind them rising from their seats and bursting into loud cheers and applause as she wrapped her arms around Draco's neck and pulled him closer, her entire body melting easily against his frame.

Standing at the altar, Blaise looked up and met his own wife's teary eyes from just behind Jaimee. Hermione was sniffing and clapping along with everyone else but the minute she saw him smirking at her, she glared at him and huffed, causing the Slytherin to snigger to himself. His amusement didn't last long, however, when the dark-haired, one-year-old baby he carried in his arms squirmed and began to whine loudly, causing him to wince and look up helplessly at his smirking wife.

When Draco had pulled back, he kept his arms around Harry's waist and pressed his forehead against hers, smiling and looking deep into her bright green eyes as the minister behind them spoke up loudly again to signal the end of the ceremony.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the British Wizarding Elite...Master and Mistress Malfoy!"

This time, Harry really did cringe involuntarily at her new name, causing Sirius, Ron and several more of her watching friends to laugh at the look of utter dismay on the bride's face. When she turned to face her new husband, Draco was grinning at her and watching her reaction with amusement dancing in his eyes.

He finally turned them both around to face their family and friends, smiling as Jaimee easily linked her arms through his and took her rightful place – exactly where she belonged – by his side.

Looking into the faces of their guests, Draco smiled and nodded respectfully to his father and mother by the front, both of which smiled back proudly at him and began to clap as well. Lawrence was smirking at Draco but the young Malfoy head easily recognized the

hidden softness in those older silver eyes that usually went unseen by everyone else except him.

His grandmother was crying tearfully into her handkerchief – much like the rest of his female cousins who were all clapping and smiling along with the crowd. Seated with the Weasleys near the front of the church, a very pregnant Lorraine was seated beside Ron and was also crying into her handkerchief, causing Draco to roll his eyes and give her a teasing smirk.

Just beside the Weasleys, Anton grinned at them when they met his eyes. He gave them a conspiratorial wink, which Draco returned easily with a smirk and nod. The blonde half-veela was seated beside Ginny Weasley but the redhead looked absolutely irritated with him, moving further away from him when Anton had attempted to turn imploringly towards her.

Byron was seated near the front with the other Malfoys and was one of the loudest cheering and clapping guests, his gaze flicking every now and then to a certain Head Unspeakable who sat with several other Ministry invited guests at the end of the church.

A couple of seats away from him, Sirius Black nervously checked to make sure Regina wasn't having difficulty standing up with her hulking 9-month baby bump. Harry smiled when she saw her godfather and apparently new godmother, laughing when a seven-year-old Keira jumped up onto her seat so she could wave higher.

"Congratulations!"

"You guys made it!"

"You look so beautiful, Jaimee!"

Harry barely heard any of their comments as she turned back around to face Draco's beaming face, chuckling when she was met with his sparkling silver eyes. A rampaging pack of eager photographers were squealing and rushing up to the front of the church as Draco took his

new bride into his arms once more, reaching up to brush away her veil from her face.

“I love you so much...Will you have me?”

She smiled and wrapped her arms around his neck again, oblivious to the horde of photographers that were flashing furiously away at the beautiful, romantic scene they made.

“...If I must, Malfoy.”

As always, Draco found himself laughing and trying to kiss his new wife at the same time – earning themselves more teasing cheers and catcalls from their watching friends. When the couple had pulled away and were about to make their way down the aisle, one of their official photographers spoke up as he walked over to them, gesturing briefly to wizarding camera he held up in his hands.

“I’d just like take several shots of you both with your family and friends, if you don’t mind.” He paused and waited until Jaimee smiled hesitantly and Draco nodded before he continued. “It’s for the society section of the newspapers. I’ll be taking just a few shots so I promise it won’t take long.” He turned and gestured to the first row of guests behind them.

“First, I’d like to take a picture of the bride and groom with their parents. Master and Mistress Malfoy...If you both would please stand here...” The photographer positioned Draco and Jaimee at the very center of the altar, waiting until Lucius, Narcissa, Sirius and Regina had stood up and placed themselves on either sides of the newly wedded couple.

Lucius and Narcissa both stood regally beside their son, flashing perfect, sophisticated smiles that easily matched Draco’s while Sirius stood on Harry’s left, slung an arm around his goddaughter’s shoulders and pointed out two fingers above her head like a pair of bunny ears.

Jaimee rolled her eyes and attempted to shrug his arm off. Unfortunately, the camera had flashed at the exact same time she had raised her hand up to block his hands away.

FLASH!

Realizing she had just ruined her first wedding picture, Harry growled angrily and punched her laughing godfather hard on the shoulder.

“SIRIUS!”

“With the Best Man and Maid of Honor, please.” The photographer followed up, indicating for both Hermione and Blaise to take their corresponding positions beside Jaimee and Draco. Draco smirked as Blaise slung an arm around his shoulder while Hermione looped her arm around Harry’s before smiling into the camera.

FLASH!

Both former Slytherins were smirking arrogantly while both former Gryffindors had warm smiles on their faces.

“With the bride’s...erm...adoptive family?” The photographer shrugged either way and readied his camera just as the entire Weasley family rushed onto the altar, causing all the blood to drain out of Draco’s face.

“Bloody hell...Help me! I’m surrounded by Weasleys!”

Harry chose to ignore Draco’s horrified whisper, grinning as Ron stood next to her and smiled widely at the camera. His arm was wrapped around Lorraine next to him, the newest Weasley giggling when both Fred and George stood on Draco’s other side and slung their arms a little too comfortably around the Malfoy Head’s shoulders.

Draco cringed and tried to move away but Fred saw this coming and decidedly mussed up his perfectly styled hair, immediately causing the blonde’s face to flush in raging anger. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley laughed at this just before Draco exploded in a loud growl.

“WEASLEY!”

FLASH!

The rest of the Weasley family – Bill, Fleur, Percy, Penelope, Charlie and Ginny — began to laugh as well as they continued to watch Harry literally holding Draco back from lunging wildly at the Weasley twins in utmost fury – the former Slytherin’s immaculate hair successfully messed up in wild, messy spikes on his head.

FLASH!

“Draco! Calm down! You can fix it again with a simple spell!”

“Okay...This one is with the groom’s school friends.”

Harry tried not to groan out loud at the photographer’s request and watched as all of Draco’s former Slytherin friends – Vincent Crabbe, Gregory Goyle, Millicent Bulstrode Goyle, Theodore Nott, Daphne Greengrass Nott, and Pansy Parkinson Cunningham and Malcolm Pellerin positioned themselves around them. Blaise had risen up from his seat and joined them again, giving Harry a consoling pat on the shoulder as he stood on her other side.

Pansy, as usual, opted to stand beside Draco but the Malfoy Head barely saw her, his eyes lingering admiringly on Harry’s face beside him. She smiled at him though the minute the photographer raised his camera, Draco slowly turned and matched the looks of all his housemates around them – a haughty, well-practiced Slytherin smirk.

FLASH!

Harry was the only one who had been smiling – albeit hesitantly – at the camera.

“Okay, next! The bride’s school friends!”

This time, Draco flinched and grumbled loudly as both Hermione and Ron stood up again – followed by Seamus Finnegan, Dean Thomas, Neville Longbottom and Luna Lovegood Longbottom, Ginny Weasley,

Parvati Patil Goldstein and Lavender Brown Boot. They positioned themselves around the couple, oblivious to Draco's scowl as they matched the warm smile Jaimee directed at the camera.

FLASH!

Draco was the only one sneering – rather unhappily – at the camera.

“This one with the groom's grandparents.”

Harry smiled nervously as Lawrence and Genevieve made their way toward them, the elder Malfoy standing beside Draco and Genevieve standing easily beside her. The older woman gave her a comforting smile and leaned down to whisper something into her ear.

“It took me awhile to get used to heels too, my dear. And I was originally a woman!”

FLASH!

The look on Harry's face was one of choking, laughing surprise when the camera flashed – Draco and Lawrence smiling cordially into the camera while both Genevieve and Harry were laughing in amusement to themselves.

“Alright, we're almost done! Last two shots!”

Jaimee tried not to let the relief show on her face as she looked up at the photographer's grinning face. Beside her, Draco saw this and chuckled, reaching his hand down and intertwining their fingers together.

“Hungry, love?”

A soft rumbling sound coming from her stomach answered his question for her and blushing in embarrassment, she bit her lip and hid her face against his chest. Draco laughed affectionately and wrapped his arms around her in a tight embrace.

“I’d like a photograph of the bride and groom with all the Malfoy sons! Over here please!”

Harry suddenly grinned mischievously as she looked up and met the equally twinkling, amused eyes of Byron, Anton, William and Reggie. All four Malfoys positioned themselves around them – Byron and Reggie beside Harry and Anton and William beside Draco.

Draco was completely oblivious to this and flashed a perfect, charming smile into the camera as the photographer in front of them began to count to three.

“One...”

Harry met Byron and Anton’s eyes, giving them a wink and a nod.

“Two...”

Reggie and William both grinned and nodded at Harry’s smile in silent agreement.

“Three!”

Just three seconds before the camera flashed, Harry, Byron, Anton, Reggie and William all looked directly into the camera and made their own unique silly face – Harry sticking her tongue out and crossing her eyes, Byron lengthening his nose and turning his hair bright orange, Anton reaching up and pretending to gag and choke himself, Reggie stuck in a silent screaming face and William pursing his lips with his eyes rolled up to the ceiling.

FLASH!

Belatedly realizing that he had been duped, Draco sputtered in absolute horror as Harry, Byron, Anton, Reggie and William all burst out into hysterical laughter after the shot had been taken. His cheeks red with both anger and dismay, Draco whipped around and glared at his so-called wife as his laughing cousins quickly snuck away back to their seats.

“You’ve corrupted my entire family!”

Jaimee simply gave him a beautiful, teasing smile and tilted her head up to silence his further angry protests with a sweet, chaste kiss.

“Alright, final shot with the groom and bride alone...”

The photographer smiled as Draco pulled Jaimee against him so that her back rested against his chest. He wrapped his arms snugly around his wife’s waist and leaned his head down so that his cheek was pressing affectionately against hers.

“Beautiful! Hold that pose...One...Two...”

Draco grinned and tilted his head slightly to place a sweet kiss on Jaimee’s cheek.

FLASH!

“Beautiful! Wonderful! These pictures will make the front page—”

Jaimee didn’t hear the photographer’s excited praise as she turned and leaned up to catch Draco’s lips in another passionate kiss, laughing when he tightened his arms around her waist and dipped her slightly backwards so that he could kiss her deeper.

FLASH!

“Perfect!”

Harry turned a confused, disgruntled look to Ron a couple of hours later that night during the wedding reception inside the huge ballroom of Malfoy Manor. She held up the bridal bouquet in her hand in curious inspection.

“You know, I just don’t understand why women are so crazy about catching this thing. I mean, it’s just a bunch of flowers!” She thought out loud but Ron just snorted and shrugged in response.



“I wouldn’t know, mate. My cousins went crazy trying to catch Lorraine’s bouquet at my wedding too. I don’t understand it either – Merlin, you really went all out for this reception!” He told her in amazement, taking a sip of his drink as he turned around and inspected their surroundings.

The entire ballroom was decorated with extravagant white ribbon and satin while there were practically people everywhere – turning every now and then to congratulate Jaimee on her beautiful wedding. Draco was off at the far side of the room conversing with some of his business associates while the rest of the Malfoys were situated at different corners of the ballroom entertaining guests.

Harry gave him a teasing grin and gestured her head towards Draco and his other business partners. “I hear from Draco’s associates that you’re one mean financial consultant these days. They all practically want me to put in good word for them to you so you wouldn’t be so harsh on their company financial practices.” She told him in amusement, causing Ron to smirk smugly to himself.

He shook his head and took another satisfying sip of his drink. “Harry, you may be my best friend and all...But I can’t do that for you. You see, it’s about time those bastards cowered before my position now.” He laughed when Harry made a face at him and shook her head.

“Ugh...Don’t do that again, Ron. You sounded like Draco for a minute there and trust me...One of him is enough for me.” She kidded, causing Ron to look horrified for a moment before he rolled his eyes and gave her a meaningful smile.

“All that aside, I’ve been promoted twice since you’ve been away.” He began, earning himself a beaming smile from Jaimee before he continued. “About two more promotions and I’ll be making enough serious money to start planning my business!” He told her, causing Harry to smile at his enthusiasm.

“That’s wonderful, mate. I’m happy for you, I really am.” She slung an arm around his shoulders and gestured briefly to Lorraine across the room where the pregnant blonde was talking and laughing by the refreshment table with Hermione.

“So...How’s the missus? She looks like Christmas came early – she’s blooming, mate! You must have some marriage going on there!” Harry teased with a wink, nudging Ron lightly in the ribs and causing the redhead to give her an embarrassed grin.

“She’s been spending a lot of time with my family these days. She and Fleur have been getting along tremendously and she’s hardly shown any signs of mood swings at all! I think it’s because Fred and George keep her laughing all the time.” He told her, shaking his head in disbelief.

Before Harry could ask him any more questions, Ron finally turned to look at her and gave her a teasing grin. “So...Mrs. Draco Malfoy...How does it feel to be married to the world’s most big-headed jerk?” He kidded lightly, causing his best friend to laugh at his words.

“It feels wonderful.”

Ron made a face at her response and the both of them ended up laughing at the same time just as Lorraine and Hermione approached them, both women smiling and pausing to give Harry a kiss on her cheek. “Harry! You look so gorgeous! That dress is perfect for you!” Lorraine exclaimed happily while Hermione reached over and pulled Harry into a tight, warm hug.

“Congratulations, Harry! The service was simply beautiful!” Hermione added, causing the black-haired bride to laugh and turn to give Lorraine a teasing smile. Seeing the former Malfoy daughter, Jaimee smiled and pulled her into a tight embrace as well.

“Mrs. Ron Weasley, you are absolutely glowing. Though I certainly hope this pregnancy is real this time.” She teased, earning a light laugh from the blonde. “How far long are you?” Harry asked curiously, causing Lorraine to smile happily and place a hand over her bulging stomach. “About a month, I suppose. Regina will definitely be having hers before me, I’m hoping to learn something from her experience.” She added, laughing at Harry’s startled expression.

Before any of them could say anything, the female half-veela's eyes suddenly snapped wide open and a sharp gasp escaped her lips. Ron and Harry were looking at her in alertness in an instant, turning bulging, worried eyes to the pregnant woman.

"What?! What's wrong?"

Hermione laughed as Lorraine looked up at them and gave them all a bright, ecstatic smile. "The baby kicked! It kicked me! Here!" She grabbed Harry and Hermione's hands and placed it over her belly, giggling again when they all felt the definite kicking coming from inside her.

Ron watched this with a quirky grin, hiding an amused laugh when he saw Harry's face absolutely pale in dismay and horror.

"G—good god...Th—there's something growing inside you!" She blurted out, causing both Lorraine and Hermione look up and blink at her in confusion when they heard the cracking in her voice. They hid a smirk when they saw Harry's face change from pale to a definite shade of green.

Visibly shaking, she tore her hand away from Lorraine's stomach and took a couple of steps backward, only to bump clumsily against several of the guests behind them. "Th—there's something growing inside you and kicking you! H—holy Merlin, c-can it eat you up from the inside too or something cause if it can—"

"Harry!" Hermione cut her off with a giggle as she rushed forward and pulled her best friend towards them again, rubbing the other girl's back in comfort. "Relax, Harry...Pregnancy is one of the most profound and wonderful things a woman can experience." She ignored both the glare Harry gave her and the snort of laughter that had come from Ron.

"You should feel lucky that you're going to be able to experience the feeling of carrying your child inside you. Trust me, Harry...It's the most surreal feeling in the world—"

“How can it be surreal when I’ll have an evil smirking, 7-pound MALFOY—”

“Can babies actually SMIRK?!” Ron asked out loud to Hermione but Harry continued before either of them could answer.

“—intent on world domination and destruction kicking my bloody uterus from the inside?!” Harry blurted out loudly, causing all three adults to blink and burst out laughing again when they saw the horror and panic on her face.

Ron was trying hard to breathe through his laughter as he slung an arm around Harry’s shaking shoulders. “Mate, Hermione’s right. It won’t be so bad, you’ll grow much closer to the baby—”

“How would YOU know?! You’ll never have to worry about that, you’re a BLOODY MALE! You don’t have to grow something in your non-existent UTERUS!”

He winced at the hissed anger in her voice and instantly backed away, his eyes darting nervously between his giggling wife and his two best friends. “Erm...Yeah, you’re right. Why don’t I just leave this pregnancy talk to the three of you...?” He hastily made his exit and walked off towards their former Gryffindor housemates before any of them could say anything else.

As soon as her husband had left, Lorraine turned to Harry again and couldn’t resist teasing the newest Malfoy some more.

“Actually, Harry...It’s been known that a Malfoy is usually around 8 pounds or more when he or she is born. 8 pounds if she’s a girl and around 9 if he’s a boy. I was 8.5 pounds when I came out. I think Draco was nearly 10 pounds when Aunt Narcissa gave birth to him.”

Jaimee felt the entire ballroom spinning around her and she would have fainted to the floor had Hermione not met Lorraine’s smirk with a quelling glare. “Harry, relax...It’s going to be fine. Don’t think about that yet.” She said calmly, reaching over to take a glass of water from the nearby refreshment table and handing it to her pale best friend.

Watching the bride down the whole glass in a couple of seconds, she and Lorraine both exchanged smiles before they turned back to Harry's nervous face. "Harry, being able to feel your child growing inside you is the most wonderful and fulfilling experience a woman has in her life. Trust me, I know." Hermione smiled as she looked up across the ballroom to where Blaise was standing with their one-year-old baby son cradled in his arms.

The Zabini Head was talking to Draco while swaying every now and then to make sure his son was still asleep, oblivious to the fact that he was now the object of all three girls' stares. At this scene, Jaimee smiled reluctantly and looked up to meet Hermione's smile.

"How does it feel to be a mother, Hermione...?" She asked curiously and this time, Lorraine matched her curiosity and looked intently at Hermione as well. They waited for the brunette to answer in hushed silence, their eyes flicking every now and then to the baby in Blaise's arms.

Hermione simply smiled at them, her brown eyes filled with an unfamiliar sense of love, pride and fierce protectiveness that Harry had never seen before.

"Once you're staring into your newly-born's beautiful face, Harry, you'll know the answer to that." Was all she said. Her words brought a smile to Harry's face and a pool of tears to Lorraine's eyes. "TH—that was so beautiful, Hermione!" She sobbed and without warning, Harry flinched away from her as she began to cry loudly into her handkerchief.

"Whoa! Hormone alert! Hormone alert! Ron, your pregnant wife is crying!"

Ron heard Harry's panicked voice and rushed back to gather his sobbing wife into his arms, ushering her away towards the far corner of the ballroom. Hermione also nodded to Harry and went off to talk to Blaise's parents behind them. Just as Harry was going to look for Byron among the crowd of guests, the former Gryffindor felt a light tapping on her shoulder.

Turning around, she was met with Sirius' boyish grin before the marauder enveloped her in a bone-crushing hug. Harry laughed at his antics and hugged him back tightly, waiting until he released her and set her back down on her feet before exclaiming.

"Sirius! You're going to be a father! I'm so happy for you!" She blurted out loud but Sirius ignored her and made an exclamation of his own.

"You're MARRIED! You're a Malfoy! I don't know if I should be saying 'congratulations' or 'condolence'!" He joked, earning another laugh and light punch from his goddaughter. Laughing, he wrapped an arm around her shoulders and gave her a kiss on the forehead.

"Actually, it's funny you should mention that. I've got a small favor to ask you..." He paused and waited for her to quirk an eyebrow in query before he continued. Biting his lip, he managed an uncertain smile before turning and gesturing to a waving Regina across the ballroom.

The pregnant red-head was talking to Narcissa and Lucius Malfoy while trying to keep a close watch on Keira – who was running around and playing with Isabella and Cherry-Lyn around the room. When he turned back to meet Harry's gaze, he offered her a helpless smile.

"I was wondering if you'd be willing to be the godmother of my son...If that's alright with you, I mean. I'm planning to name him 'James' after your father. I already talked to Regina about it and she's more than agreed with me—"

"YES! Of course, I will!" Harry instantly exclaimed, laughing as she threw her arms around her godfather in a tight, warm hug. The marauder grinned in relief and hugged her back, both former Gryffindors' faces beaming in absolute happiness.

"Great! Ha! I knew you couldn't say no to me! Although, I have to tell you Harry, you'd better spoil my son like crazy! I expect the best presents, the best advice, I expect you to be the one to talk to him about awkward stuff like sex —" Sirius' readily prepared tirade was

cut off when Harry rolled her eyes and stuck her tongue out at him in response.

“I’ll see you later, Sirius.” She punched his shoulder again, laughing once more as she waved him off back to Regina and began to walk towards Byron. The metamorphagus was talking to several other purebloods near the end of the ballroom.

As she walked towards him, she bumped into the disgruntled figure of Anton Malfoy – who was, at that moment, glaring irritably at the back of a certain red-headed woman’s head. When he realized Harry was staring at him in confusion, he blinked hastily and turned to give her a pointed glare.

“Harry, can I ask you a question? It’s rather personal but I’d appreciate it all the same if you answered.” He drawled loudly, the anger in his voice barely restrained. He spoke up again before she could even blink or utter a proper response.

“When you were going out with Ginny...Was she always so...BLOODY DIFFICULT?!”

Harry opened her mouth to answer him but Anton went on, running a hand furiously through his sleek, silver hair.

“I mean, we were just FINE yesterday! And we aren’t even an official couple yet, we’ve just been going out a couple of times! She sees me talking and laughing around with this really cute blonde from Sapientia’s and she goes all BALLISTIC on me!” He raged angrily, causing Harry to hide her smirk behind her hand as he continued.

“I don’t understand that bloody woman! She’s so goddamn FRUSTRATING that she makes me want to TEAR MY HAIR OUT! She scares away or even mauls EVERY SINGLE GIRL I talk to! She’s so cranky and jealous and bossy and high maintenance and—”

Harry finally burst out laughing and shook her head right in the middle of Anton’s enraged speech, causing the half-veela’s eyes to narrow and glare at her in impatience. He waited until her laughter had subsided before he continued.

“Was there something amusing about what I said—”

“Oh relax, Anton!” She laughed again and slung an easy arm around his shoulders, gesturing discreetly to where Ginny was still pointedly ignoring Anton’s very existence from across the ballroom.

“Ginny Weasley is one of the strongest female personalities I have ever met but that’s precisely the allure she gives off. She’s insanely jealous and perhaps you should think more about your libertine ways if you expect anything from her.” She told him but her words caused Anton’s eyes to widen even more in dismay.

“She can’t honestly expect a purely monogamous relationship from me, right?! I don’t know anything about that! I mean , I’ve never done that before! I can’t—” The blonde half-veela was cut off from his panicked speech when an all-too-familiar arm slung itself around his shoulders.

He and Harry both looked up but it was the latter who groaned loudly when they were met with a dark-haired, handsome face smiling flirtatiously at Anton’s confused expression.

“I don’t believe we’ve met before...My name is Spencer Addison, I’m one of Byron and Harry’s coworkers at the Ministry—”

“He’s straight, Spence! Why don’t you go hit on some of my actual gay friends like Dean and Seamus over there?” Harry interrupted him sharply before Anton could realize what was happening, causing Spencer to give her a disgruntled glare.

“You’re no fun, Harry.” He complained loudly, giving a blinking, bewildered Anton a wistful look from head to toe before he rolled his eyes and walked away. As soon as he was gone, Anton turned a questioning grimace to Harry but she simply grinned at him and shook her head.

“Nope, you didn’t have your veela charm on. He really was just gay.”



She left the blonde staring after her retreating form in gaping, speechless silence, flicking her eyes around again until she caught sight of Byron laughing loudly with some of his other friends from Sapientia's Academy. When he saw her approaching him, he excused himself from them and turned to give her a friendly grin.

"Well, well, well...If it isn't the new gorgeous and deliciously sexy Mistress Malfoy." She laughed when he gave her a gallant kiss on the back of her palm. "What can I do for you, Harry? Are you as excited about doing work next week as I am?" He asked her with a wink but Harry shook her head and indicated to the far corner of the ballroom.

"I'm excited about starting work not doing work...Or should I say, the boss." She teased with a smirk, sniggering to herself when Byron's cheeks flushed red and he gave her a vicious snarl.

"You hardly have any right to tease me yet! I haven't done a thing on that gorgeous body!" A suggestive smirk crossed his lips as he turned to stare at Vincent Ashford's incredibly toned physique across the room, letting his eyes linger on every one of the Head Unspeakable's muscles.

Harry snorted at this and rolled her eyes at Byron's words. "Why don't you ask him to dance? You're at a wedding, it's the perfect opportunity to ask your boss for a 'friendly' dance." She told him but Byron paled at her words and shook his head hastily.

"Are you mad?! Did you see what he did to Addison when the idiot hit on him?! He knocked the bloody git unconscious for FIVE days!" He snapped at her but Jaimee shook her head and gave him a pointed look.

"Spencer didn't just hit on him, he grabbed his arse! Of course, Ashford knocked him out! I would have done the same thing had he did that to Draco." She laughed at the image her words made and Byron was about to offer a retort then they both froze dead in their tracks.

"I realize this conversation is about me. What can I do for you both?"

Harry and Byron both gulped loudly and looked up to meet Ashford's handsome, otherwise blank face. The Head Unspeakable's lips were lifted in a lazy grin and one of his eyebrows was raised in sheer, noticeable arrogance.

Snapping out of her nervousness first, Harry managed a laugh and nudged Byron sharply beside her. "H—hey, boss! U—um...We were just talking about how Byron here wanted to ask you to dance! He r—really thinks you're a great dancer and he was hoping to pick up some of your moves—"

Byron turned sharp, glaring daggers to Harry but she ignored it and kept her attention on Ashford's decidedly amused smirk. He stared at the metamorphagus for several seconds before he shrugged one of his shoulders and offered him a sexy grin.

"...Care to dance then, Malfoy?"

The dark-haired Malfoy sputtered incoherently for several moments, blinking at the handsome man in shock before finally recovering and managing to give Ashford an equally teasing grin.

"Well...Is that allowed...sir...?" He asked briefly in a low drawl, pointedly choosing to ignore the fact that Harry had clamped a hand over her mouth to keep from laughing out loud.

Ashford's grin suddenly transformed into an easily seductive smirk that even Harry couldn't help staring at for several minutes. He raised another eyebrow and easily supplied the metamorphagus a simple, blunt answer.

"It's not."

Byron's cheeks flushed slightly pink at this but he managed a nervous laugh and offered his hand anyway to the older man.

"Then I'm all up for breaking some of the rules if you are...sir."

Again, Harry had to bite her tongue to keep from laughing as Ashford looked amused at Byron's response and began to lead the

metamorphagus to the side of the dance floor. As soon as he had managed to meet her eyes again, Bryon offered her a thankful wink which she easily returned, smiling and waving at him with a wide smile.

“How old is Elliot...?” Draco asked as he watched Blaise shift the sleeping, dark-haired infant carefully in his arms. He looked up and offered the blonde a grin. “He’s a little over a year...He can’t do much yet.” He told him, his eyes flicking back on his son’s adorably sleeping features.

Draco rolled his eyes at the pure happiness he heard in his best friend’s voice but smiled anyway and took a sip of his champagne. “So...You and Granger, huh? How’s the married life, Zabini? I never knew you to be the whipped, indulgent husband type.” He teased but Blaise merely smirked at him and raised an eyebrow.

“It’s going really well, Draco. Hermione’s the assistant Head to the CISO Department already. She’s incredible. My family’s company has also been booming well this year under my management so everything is just perfect.” He answered, much to Draco’s amusement.

Watching as Blaise adjusted Elliot in his arms again, his attention was drawn back to the baby once more and he asked another question that was forming in his head. “So how does it feel...? To have a son, I mean...It must be wonderful.” Draco sounded wistful when he asked this and earned himself a smirk from his best friend.

Blaise chose his next words carefully, keeping his eyes trained on his son. “Well...I feel as if I’m pushed to be more responsible with my actions now...Like I have standards to uphold that I owe to my son when he grows up.” He paused and watched as Draco’s face suddenly paled in nervousness.

Nevertheless, he continued to talk. “I know now that it’s never me I have to think about first. It will always be my wife...my son...my family. They come first before anything else and for me, that’s a very serious responsibility.” He told him, causing Draco to mull the meaning of his words silently.

After a long moment of silence, Blaise turned to him and spoke up again with a grin. "So...You have it all, Draco. You're married to the girl of your dreams! You're the CEO of MMC! What's next for you? What do you want to do?" He asked in a low whisper so as not to wake up his son, watching as Draco looked up and answered him with a suggestive smirk.

"My utterly shaggable wife."

He and Blaise both burst into muffled, boyish laughter and turned to look at the new Mistress Malfoy. Jaimee was now talking animatedly with her old Gryffindor housemates – drawing just about every single male's attention in the room with her exquisite beauty and perfectly slender figure.

Turning back to smirk at his best friend, Draco shook his head at him in disbelief.

"Did you honestly think I was going to blurt out some sappy comment for you like that, Zabini? We are Slytherin men! We do not talk to each other about our sappy, romantic lives and don't you forget it!" He snapped causing Blaise to laugh again and nod in amusement.

"Forgive me, Oh holy Prince of Slytherin."

Neither of them were able to say any more as Anton suddenly joined them at that very moment, downing the glass of champagne he held in his hand. Draco gave him an easy smirk and offered him a friendly handshake which the other Malfoy easily returned.

"Anton, I hope you have all those detailed progress reports about MMC for the two years I've been away ready for me. I'll be going through them soon as soon as I get back from my honeymoon." He told him, watching as Anton nodded and gave Blaise a nod of acknowledgment as well.

"They're already prepared and waiting in your office, Drac. Which reminds me, I came here to tell you that...Well..." He leaned in closer to the two men and spoke in a softer drawl. "I have that property you wanted ready like you asked. It should be done by the time you and

Harry get back.” He told him, to which Draco answered him with a thankful grin.

“I’m in your debt, cousin. I appreciate it.” He told him but Anton merely scoffed and rolled his eyes. “Debt, my arse...Nothing is free, Draco. You know the Malfoy code. I’ll give you the price for all these favors I’ve been doing for you later.” He retorted and instead of getting angry, Draco merely smirked in agreement and inclined his head.

Blaise looked at the two of them in confusion. “What are you guys talking about? Why did you buy new property, Draco?” He asked and Draco winked at him, gesturing with his half-empty wine glass to his laughing wife across the room before he answered.

“It’s a little surprise I prepared for the bride.”

They were interrupted at that very moment when around them, all the single women started squealing and screaming loudly before rushing to the very center of the dance floor where Jaimee was waiting with a bemused smirk on her face.

“EVERYONE! THE BRIDE IS ABOUT TO THROW THE BOUQUET!”

Anton smirked when he heard Hermione’s announcement and shook his head to himself, leaning over to whisper something to the two equally smirking Slytherins beside him.

“Ah...The throwing of the bride’s bouquet. This is the part I find most entertaining in weddings. A hundred women clawing at one another like a pack of animals for a mere bunch of flowers.” Draco and Blaise both sniggered in amusement and flicked their eyes back over to the scene.

Harry certainly didn’t look any better off than they did about the whole tradition and held her beautiful bridal bouquet up in the air with a look of exasperation on her face. She heard about a dozen women screaming for her to throw it already, causing her to roll her eyes and toss it up high into the air amidst the outbursts of more screaming and squealing behind her.

The minute it had left her hands, she whirled around and watched with a smirk of amusement on her face as the crowd of women behind her went absolutely crazy – tearing and shoving at each other to grab the lost bouquet somewhere in the mixture of limbs and gowns.

Laughing, Jaimee eventually began to cheer and clap her hands when Ginny Weasley emerged victorious from the entire struggle – jumping up from the middle of the crowd and holding the bouquet up high in the air while squealing and laughing her success.

Finally tearing his eyes away from the scene, Draco smirked and spoke up in another amused drawl to his cousin beside him. “Well, it looks like Weasley’s caught this one...”

He and Blaise looked at each other in confusion when they were met with cold silence and turning around, both Slytherins ended up laughing again when they saw that Anton Malfoy had, in fact, dropped unconscious in a dead, horrified faint onto the ground.

From the very center of the ballroom dance floor, Hermione, the Maid of Honor, had chosen that exact same moment to hold her wand up to her throat and shout out one last loud announcement with a beaming, affectionate smile on her face.

**“TO THE BRIDE AND GROOM...YOU’RE BOTH WANTED ON THE DANCE FLOOR!”**

Setting his drink onto a nearby table, Draco silently nodded his leave to a smiling Blaise before grinning and walking slowly through the parting crowd of guests. He saw Harry waiting for him right in the middle of the dance floor – a tender and teasing smile on her beautiful face.

Amidst all of the awed glances and cheering of the entire room of guests, Draco Malfoy swept his blushing bride right up into his arms and the both of them began leading the rest of the dancers in a perfect, graceful dance that spoke of the many more they were to share in their new life together.

“Draco, what is this about...?! Can I open my eyes now...?” Harry complained loudly as she adjusted the blindfold Draco had tied securely around her eyes. Clutching onto her husband’s hand, she heard him chuckling as he slowly continued to lead her through what seemed like a patch of grass.

It had been an entire week since their wedding and they had just arrived from their honeymoon that afternoon. They had been all over Europe that past week – from Greece, to Rome, to Milan and Spain. Their last stop had been Paris and though the honeymoon had been absolutely romantic, Harry was more than exhausted and wanted nothing more than to curl up and sleep.

Draco, however, seemed to have other plans in mind and had called her out from the manor, tied a blindfold around her eyes and had apparated them to some unknown location that Harry apparently had yet to find out. The Malfoy Head had been talking her through the entire time, his footsteps laced with obvious excitement.

Harry was about to complain again when Draco chuckled and squeezed her hand, giving her a reassuring kiss on the cheek. “We’re almost there, love...Hold on. Let me get you into the right position.” He answered her, turning her around gently so that she was facing to her right. At his words, she narrowed her eyes and gave a derisive scoff.

“Right position...? Draco, this better not be another one of your perverted sex ideas because if it is, I’m telling you right now I’m exhausted and I—”

She heard him laughing at her words before he finally reached behind her and slipped the blindfold off her eyes, allowing her to squint into the dark night. For several minutes, she seemed to stare off at the large house in front of her in confusion, turning to raise her eyebrow at Draco.

“Draco, where are we?! Is this another one of your family’s estates or something—”

Her words eventually died on her lips as she finally realized where they were.

Blinking away the tears that began to flood her eyes, a sharp gasp escaped her lips as she took a shaky step forward and looked up at the beautifully elegant yet simple house in front of her. An aching feeling of bittersweet nostalgia and recognition began to surge through her chest.

Behind her, Draco smiled softly as he watched her take several more shaky steps forward towards the newly built modest three-story mansion in front of them. He admired the wave of emotions that seemed to be reflected off Jaimee's glistening green eyes.

"W—We're in G—Godric's Hollow...Th—This is my m—my p—parent's house...You had it rebuilt...D—Draco..." Her voice choked up and she covered her trembling lips with her hands, fighting desperately to keep the feminine emotions from her face.

For the first time, however, she wasn't able to win against it and the tears began spilling continuously down her pale cheeks, a soft sob escaping her lips. Laughing gently, Draco walked up to her and pulled her into his arms, allowing her to cry softly against his chest.

"H—hey...Harry, I meant this to be a surprise for you. I didn't want you to cry over it...Come here, you silly woman..." He teased her affectionately, stroking her hair as she trembled and wrapped her arms tightly around him to seek for silent comfort.

Draco obliged easily and wrapped his arms even tighter around her, leaning down and dropping a kiss onto the top of her head. Tears spilling from her eyes, she turned her head and stared at the newly built house in silence, trying – and failing – to form the right words to say to him.

"D—Draco, I—"

"I thought you might want a change of scenery...This wizarding neighborhood is slightly friendlier as opposed to the aristocratic, pureblooded neighborhood around Malfoy Manor." He began



uncertainly, unsure of what to make of her silence as she continued to cry against him.

When she didn't answer, he continued to speak anyway and offered an encouraging laugh. "I-It's not furnished yet. I thought you might want to help me with that. Weasley and Lorraine live not too far from here, actually...And Blaise is thinking of purchasing a nearby property here as well." He paused again, watching Harry look up at the house in silence.

The look in her eyes was unreadable that Draco almost panicked, concluding to himself that she may not have appreciated him rebuilding her parent's house because it brought back too many painful memories of the place they were murdered.

"D—don't get me wrong or anything...As the Head of the family, we're still required to live in Malfoy Manor at least thrice a week but I thought it would be nice to live here during the remaining four days. It's homier and you might find it more comfortable as opposed to the Manor. I'm sorry if—"

Harry cut off Draco's nervous explanation by reaching up and yanking his face down to meet her lips in a sweet, passionate kiss. Her eyes were still glistening with tears but she had a beautiful, loving smile on her face as she pulled away and looked up into his warm gray eyes.

"Th—Thank you...I love it here, Draco...Thank you..." Was all she could manage to say at that moment as her lips were still trembling and she was still staring at the beautiful house that she had once lived in with her parents as a baby.

It wasn't nearly as large or as luxurious as Malfoy Manor but it was her home and looking up at it now brought such an overwhelming feeling of both happiness and sadness to her chest. She knew there were still certain memories of pain and loss in that house but more than anything, she intended to fill it completely with the memories of love and laughter that had once reverberated in it back when James and Lily Potter were still alive.

Swallowing the lump forming in her throat, she turned to face Draco beside her and squeezed his hand tightly, finally managing to give him a weak, tender smile. "I love you, you silly Slytherin prat." She teased, causing the blonde to reward her with a quirky grin.

"I love you too...You overemotional woman."

She promptly forgot about crying altogether and protested sharply when Draco hoisted her up easily into his arms, holding her up bridal style as he carried her struggling figure to the front door of the house. Jaimee ended up squealing with laughter as Draco smirked arrogantly and carried her over the door threshold, setting her back down inside the large, empty living room so she could notice the trail of beautiful rose petals along the glossed, wooden floor.

Looking up at him with a knowing smirk and a raised eyebrow, Harry shook her head in amusement at the feigned innocent expression on her husband's face. Playing along with his antics, she turned and slowly began to follow the trail all the way to the master bedroom upstairs.

Once she got there and opened the slightly ajar door, the sight that greeted her caused a light laugh of amusement and surprise to escape her lips.

The room itself was practically empty except for single, luxurious king-sized poster bed and several candles magically floating up in the air that casted a seductive glow around the room. The rose petals were not only scattered around the floor but most were sprinkled on the bed's silk white sheets and a faint scent of jasmine filled the room, causing her to turn around and meet Draco's suggestive smirk with a mock admonishing glare.

"I though you said the house wasn't furnished yet, Draco..."

Instead of answering her, Draco reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out a single lily, placing it on the crystal vase sitting atop the small bedside table beside the bed. Looking at the simple flower in confusion, Harry's eyes softened when Draco looked back up and gave her a tender smile.

"You see those roses, Potter...?" He gestured briefly to the scattered petals around the room. "They are a dime a dozen...You, however..." He smirked playfully and tapped her on the nose, causing her to roll her eyes. "You are a rare breed. You're a lily, Harry...So simple yet so beautiful and standing out among the rest. And I love you so much..."

He would have bent down to kiss her had Harry not chuckled softly and pulled away several inches. She looked up at him and gave him a pointed smirk. "What am I, a girl? If you wanted sex, Draco, all you had to do was say so. Only real women need to be romanced first." She quipped out loud, causing Draco to bury his head into her shoulder and burst out laughing.

"Potter, you are such a disrespectful little chit!"

She squealed in laughter again when Draco shoved her backwards onto the bed, watching with a smirk as she crawled backwards several inches on her elbows along the white sheets before raising a seductive eyebrow and curling her finger beckoningly at him with a playful smile.

**\*RATED SCENE DELETED\***

Utterly and completely spent, he collapsed on top of her and rolled them over so that she was lying cradled against his chest. He was still inside her when he pulled the white blanket over their exhausted, aching bodies.

She sighed contentedly and snuggled against him, closing her eyes as one of Draco's hands gently stroked her hair. Just as he reached over to the bedside table for his wand to cast the anti-pregnancy charm on her, Harry's eyes snapped open and she quickly placed a hand over his, shaking her head at his surprised look.

Draco blinked at her, a small, loving smile suddenly spreading on his face as his wife blushed but gently pushed his hand back down until it rested firmly on the nightstand. Staring nervously at him, she bit her lip and offered him a disarming smile.

"It's okay...Leave it alone..." She whispered, slowly using her fingers to pry his open, allowing him to drop his wand back on the table. Then, taking his hand in hers, she ignored Draco's chuckle and snuggled back against him, smiling when his arms wrapped themselves comfortably against her small waist.

He stared up at the ceiling for a long time, savoring the feel of her warm body against his and the wonderful, peaceful beating of heart against his chest. As though sensing his thoughts, Harry propped herself up on one elbow and peered down at his contented, smirking face. She raised an eyebrow in mild amusement and spoke up in a soft, teasing voice.

"...Perfect, Mr. Malfoy...?"

Looking up into the stunning, beautiful face and the warm, loving green eyes of the woman he knew was perfect for him in every single way imaginable, Draco quirked the corners of his lips into a handsome, lazy grin and shook his head in response.

"No such thing..."

A/N: And we're done. :sobbing in a crumpled heap on the floor: I can't believe the story is finally finished! I'm so happy and sad at the same time! Waaaaaah!

I hope you all enjoyed this chapter, particularly the wedding pictures and how everything had turned out for everyone in the end. By the way, on that note, I need all your opinions! Who do you think I should pair Byron with and why? Vincent Ashford or Spencer Addison? It would really help me a lot because frankly, I can't decide either! Haha.

I won't be writing a one-shot about Byron anymore because his and Anton's love lives will be given more spotlight in the sequel. Which reminds me, about Anton, does everyone want an Anton/Ginny pairing in the sequel? Or someone else? Tell me your thoughts!

Now that the story is over, please be a dear for one final time and LEAVE ME A WONDERFUL REVIEW! Thank you all so much to

those who have stuck with me through thick and thin of this story – you know who you all are! I love you all so much and I hope to see you also during the course of this story's sequel mmkay?

CHEERS EVERYONE! WOOHOO!